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KANTIAN ETHICS

AND THE

ETHICS OF EVOLUTION.

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Δόξειε δ' ἂν ἴσως βέλτιον εἶναι καὶ δεῖν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ γε τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἀναιρεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ φιλοσόφους ὄντας· ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντοιν φίλοιν ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

ARISTOTLE: *Eth. Nic.*, I. 4.

KANTIAN ETHICS

AND THE

ETHICS OF EVOLUTION.

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

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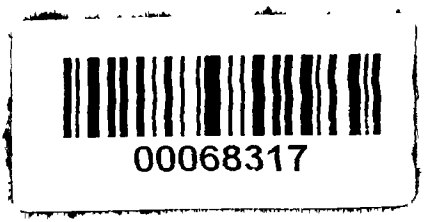


PREFACE.

THE following *Essay*, which is now published by the Hibbert Trustees, was written in Germany about a year ago, during the author's tenure of a Hibbert Travelling Scholarship.

The *Essay* is a critical study of the two representative systems of Ethics, with one or other of which the names of most thinkers in England and America are at present associated. Mill and Hamilton, the philosophical leaders of the last generation, have chiefly a historical interest for ours; and the undying dualism of metaphysical thought is propagated in Critical Idealism and Evolutionistic Realism. Kant laid the foundations of the one, just a hundred years ago; Mr. Herbert Spencer, in our own day, has laid the foundations of the other. The present *Essay* attempts an estimate of the ethical philosophy of each of these teachers. The author has not assumed the infallibility of either system, and then proceeded to refute the other from this dogmatic standpoint: he has, on the contrary, made an honest

endeavour to discriminate between the truth and the error which his studies led him to believe each system contained. He can sincerely say he has sought nothing but truth. And, in the quest of it, he hopes he has not been disrespectful towards either of the eminent thinkers whose principles he here criticizes.

In addition to the obligations acknowledged in the *Essay* itself, the author naturally owes much to the distinguished professors of philosophy, in Great Britain and Germany, whose lectures he had the privilege of attending. But to one man, whose friendship it is an honour to have enjoyed,—to the broad scholar and the keen, discerning critic,—to the classic historian of Greek Philosophy and the foremost thinker of modern Europe,—to Professor Eduard Zeller of Berlin, the author desires to express special obligations for much that need not here be specified, but not least for his constant exemplification of the candid, truth-loving spirit described in the Aristotelian motto of this *Essay*,—a spirit of which it is hoped some reflex may be found in the following pages.

ACADIA COLLEGE,
WOLFVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA.

July, 1881.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

1. Intelligible and Empirical Character . . 1
2. Freedom of the Will 20
3. The Moral Principle 49
4. Evolutionistic Hedonism 69

KANTIAN ETHICS AND THE ETHICS OF EVOLUTION.

1. *Intelligible and Empirical Character.*

THE reform which Kant inaugurated in Philosophy he himself has likened to the work of Copernicus. As the astronomer found himself unable to explain the phenomena of the heavens without attributing motion to the earth, which till then had passed for the motionless centre of the world; so the philosopher could give no satisfactory account of the fact of human knowledge, until, in association with a receptivity for impressions of sense, which Empiricists regarded as the only condition, he conceived a spontaneity of intellect that manifested itself in combining and arranging those passive elements into the unity of an orderly experience. The laws in accordance with which this synthesis of thought was carried on were called Categories; and the forms into which the sensations fell, ere the Categories were applied to them, holding partly of sense and partly of thought, were called Intuitions. Space and Time are Intuitions; Causality and Substance are Categories. As distinguished from the sense-given elements of our knowledge, both are *à priori:* that is, they are constitutive of, and not derived from, experience; they are brought forth by the mind in the act of knowing, and not imposed upon it by the object

known. But in themselves they are barren and incapable of producing knowledge. Not till their empty possibilities have been quickened into life by a sensuous content does there arise the world of our objective and subjective experience. This filling that sense supplies is given from without and points to a world of things-in-themselves, whereof ours is merely a copy—a copy, too, more or less distorted by the media through which it has passed in becoming known. If the world we know be called *phenomenal,* that other world, of which we know absolutely nothing, may be distinguished as *noumenal.* It is the former that Kant explained with his Copernican notion. It emerged from his investigation as a system of thought-relations, specialized in the forms of space and time—themselves the product of thought—and realized or actualized in a manifold of sensuous content.

But if the object is thus constituted it is evident that mind is legislative for nature. Accordingly causality, which has hitherto met us as an *à priori* category or form of thought, must now be regarded as a relation of things. In passing from the pure ether of thought, through the medium of perception, into the palpable reality of things, it has taken a sensuous colouring, and appears as a law of necessary succession in time. On this law all nature is built up. Not merely in the objective, but, according to Kant, in the subjective sphere as well, are events bound together by the causal nexus. Everything that happens in time is causally related with preceding events in time, be it the conscious volition of a human being or the blind movement of a rolling stone. The phenomenal man is no exception to the laws of the phenomenal world. His conduct is as necessarily determined as the processes and events of nature.

Thus far of the Critique of knowledge, which is, however, not the only problem of philosophy. The fact of morality also needs an explanation, and Kant, as if preparing the way for his ethical investigations, endeavoured to show in his first Critique that the interpretation he had given the notion of causality did not necessarily conflict with the conception of human freedom.* He insists on the distinction between the practical and the theoretical sphere without attempting to diminish the claims of either. The "ought," he remarks, expresses a kind of necessity and connexion which meets us nowhere in nature. The moral law prescribes something that should be; the physical laws formulate what is, what has been, and what must be. That enjoins a translation of thought into being; these are a rendering of being in terms of thought. Further, every event in nature is the effect of another event, which, like it, is a phenomenal appearance. Nowhere does a mere notion bring forth anything existent. But the "ought" expresses a possible action, of which the ground is nothing but a mere conception (p. 379). It is true that the dutiful action must be one that is possible under the conditions of nature, but these concern only its appearance in the outer world, not its origin in the will. Hence reason asserts the necessity of certain actions, which have not yet happened and which perhaps never will happen, but of which nevertheless it assumes it has within itself the causality. This assumption is even more conspicuous in the disapprobation we express regarding immoral acts already committed. We condemn the liar, no matter how completely his offence be explicable from his nature and surroundings. We see that he would not have told this particular lie at this

* *Werke*, iii. 374-386 (Edition Hartenstein).

particular moment but for imperfect education, evil companionship, a nature little susceptible to shame, a character light and unreflecting, and the peculiar temptations and circumstances in which he then found himself. Nevertheless the liar is condemned, not because of these or even of his evil life in the past, but because we assume that the man might have acted as though they had never been, because we believe that his action was wholly unconditioned by his previous life and habits, and that he might at that instant have begun, entirely from himself alone, a series of events in which lying would have found no place whatsoever. Our blame is grounded on a law of thought, in accordance with which we regard reason as a cause that could and should have determined a different course of conduct, even though all sensuous motives were in opposition. The liar in the moment of lying is guilty, even though the lie be determined by foregoing conditions, from which it might have been predicted with the certainty of a solar or a lunar eclipse.

Every human action has accordingly two sides, from which arise contrary determinations regarding its causation. Hence, in Kant's words, "the only question is whether it is possible, if merely natural necessity be recognized in the entire series of all events, to regard that series, which, on the one side, is a mere product of nature, on the other side as a product of freedom." (p. 377.) An affirmative answer to this question Kant grounds on his distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. If we denote by "character" the law by which a cause operates, then causality of the noumenon will have an intelligible character, that of the phenomenon an empirical character. By the latter we mean

that every action of the subject stands in connexion with other actions and events, according to laws of nature, whence, as from its conditions, it may be deduced, and that it constitutes with these a single series of events in the order of nature. By the former we mean that the noumenal ego, which is not subject to the conditions of sensuous experience, may be the self-originating cause of actions which appear under those conditions. Man, as having an empirical character is determined, as having an intelligible character he is free.

The exact relation between the empirical and the intelligible character is far from clear in Kant's account, which perhaps only reflects the confusion in Kant's thought. We are, however, not left without one distinguishing mark. As the noumenon is not subject to the conditions under which we know, its intelligible character indicates a causality that differs from that of the empirical character in being unconditioned by time. "It commences *from* itself its effects in the world of sense, but in such a way that the action does not begin *in* itself." (p. 376.) This relation is described in various terms, without, however, receiving further elucidation. The empirical causality is called an effect (*Wirkung*) of the intelligible causality (p. 377); and the empirical character the manifestation (*Erscheinung*), or the sensuous schema (*sinnliches Schema*) of the intelligible character (p. 376 and p. 383). In virtue of this relation, Kant maintains that, though human actions are unchangeably determined in the empirical character of each individual, they are nevertheless free; for that empirical character, whence they flow, is itself the freely-originated product of the intelligible character. Nor must freedom be conceived as mere independence of empirical conditions; it is the faculty of beginning

from itself alone a series of events in the phenomenal world.

This then is the hypothesis by which Kant seeks to show the possibility of morality under the Critical Philosophy. No better criticism can be made upon it than to trace its historical development. For, in general, it may be maintained that the full implication of any theory is not perceived by the age in which it appears, but is brought out only in the course of succeeding generations. The abstract notions of Socrates must await the discerning eye of Plato before they can manifest themselves as the archetypal ideas of our unreal material universe. So Cartesianism full-grown becomes Spinozism. So the Empiricism of Locke, become conscious of itself, passes into the Scepticism of Hume. And so, as we venture to think, the Determinism of Schelling and Schopenhauer is the logical outcome of Kant's doctrine of intelligible and empirical character. This transition we must now briefly sketch.

Schelling follows Kant in relegating freedom to the intelligible character which is subject to no relation, either of causality or of time.* It can, therefore, never be determined by anything that has gone before, inasmuch as it precedes, not in order of time, but according to its notion, everything else which is or which happens in it. Free actions issue directly from the intelligible character. But this, did it determine itself from indeterminateness without any ground whatever, would not differ from caprice, and freedom could have no other meaning than contingency or chance. It must, therefore, before determining itself to any definite act, have in itself

* *Ueber das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Werke*, vii. 331-417 (Ed. Cotta, 1860).

a certain determination; and this cannot be anything else but its own essence, its own inmost nature, which is no indefinite universal, but the definite character of this particular individual. The intelligible essence can, accordingly, so certainly as its actions are absolutely free, as certainly act only in accordance with its own inmost nature; for that alone is free which acts according to the laws of its own being, and is determined by nothing else either within or without. Individual action is accordingly the consequence of the inner necessity of a free being. But what is this inner necessity? According to Schelling, it is the product of freedom, man being what he is in virtue of *his own act.* In the original creation, when the eternal yearning gave birth at once to God and nature, man, who now appears determined, was an undetermined being, and by an act of his own he took to himself the definite character with which we now find him here. What he was to be, he alone could and did decide. The decision, however, does not fall in time: the act by which his earthly life was determined belongs to eternity. Everyone feels that he is what he is from all eternity, and that he has not merely become such in time. Hence, although the necessity of all our actions is undeniable, our moral conceptions prove that this necessity is the outcome of our own freedom. That Judas betrayed Christ neither he himself nor any other creature could have prevented; nevertheless the betrayal was not a necessity, but an act of perfect freedom. The radical evil in human nature is in this life wholly unalterable by any exercise of freedom; though it is, originally, man's own act—an act of which, though all memory be vanished, a consciousness yet remains in his self-accusations and his repentance.

This is the essence of Schelling's doctrine, in which, notwithstanding a cunning interweaving of the myths of Plato and the effusions of Jacob Böhme, the thought of Kant will be seen to have undergone a development that has carried it almost, if not quite entirely, over into its opposite. Only a Schopenhauer is needed to deduce and formulate the system of necessity with which the doctrine is already big. And Schopenhauer showed himself equal to the task.*

The central point of his philosophy is the treatment of the will. Kant had set over against the phenomenal world we know, as ground and source of it, a noumenal world of which we know nothing. By the help of this distinction he was able to maintain the freedom of the will—the freedom of the intelligible character as opposed to the necessity of the empirical character. Schopenhauer, undoubtedly following hints that had already appeared in Schelling, converts the entire noumenal world into an all-pervading will, which, in its blind movement towards existence, flings the unreal shadow of our seemingly real universe of thought and things. The intelligible character is this will in so far as it appears in a particular individual in a definite degree; the empirical character is this appearance itself as it is seen in the mode of action in time and the bodily configuration in space. But this will is not inseparable from knowledge; on the contrary, it exists and manifests itself in all nature, from the animal downwards, without it. Knowledge is a secondary phenomenon accompanying its higher objectivation; and, being dependent for its appearance on an animal organism, it is physical rather

* *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bks. ii. and iv.; *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik.*

than metaphysical. Knowledge is therefore conditioned by will, not will by knowledge. But the intelligible character is the manifestation of will; our character therefore precedes our knowledge, which is only the glass that shows us what we are.

Our notion of will is the only one among all possible notions that does not arise from our perceptions, but from an immediate consciousness of our own being, before as yet the forms and conditions of knowledge have any existence, when the knowing subject and the known object still retain the unity of their primitive condition. This will is the only reality in a world of appearances and mere images of the brain. Natural causes are, to use Malbranche's term, only the *occasion* for a manifestation of the one reality. Nothing in the world has an absolute cause of its existence, but merely a cause of its existence now and here. Such causes are of three kinds: forces in the inorganic world, irritation in the organic world, and motives in the animal world. In all these cases the causation is essentially the same. Here as there it is the one groundless will, which, appearing in different degrees of manifestation, is itself subject to no laws or conditions. No cause can determine the character of anything, but only the manifestation of the character already there. Thus motives may influence the outer form of a man's life, but they leave untouched its inner meaning and content. Our acts may be determined by our surroundings, so far as their specific nature is concerned; but their source and their general character are changelessly the same. *Dir kannst du nicht entfliehen* is, as Goethe assures us, the oracle of sibyls and prophets.

The notion of freedom is negative. When we say the

will is free, we mean merely that the one indivisible reality, which manifests itself in all phenomena, is not subject to the causal relation by which these are necessarily determined. Man, like every other part of nature, is objectivation of the one blind and groundless will. He is stocked with forces and qualities, which react definitely when acted upon. This series of reactions makes up his empirical character, which is as inexorably determined by the intelligible character as this by the groundless will. Beneath the changing hull of his years and relations, of his knowledge and opinions, lies, like a crab in its shell, the identical individual self, changeless and unchangeable. His actions indicate both to himself and to others what he really is. *Operari sequitur esse.* A change in his actions follows a change in his motives; and as these work through the medium of knowledge, in that alone is given the possibility of a better life. No other change is conceivable: the heart of stone cannot become a heart of flesh. The moral consciousness, however, does not excuse the transgressor or cast the blame on his motives; it sees that objectively regarded a very different action was quite possible, indeed would have occurred, *if he had been only another person.* But that he is such an one as the action shows him, and no other, —that is what is inexcusable: here, in his *esse,* is the spot which the sting of conscience pricks. The *operari* is the occasion for self-accusation, the *esse* the ground of it.

Woe is me, that I am me and not another!

With this vain lamentation we may not unfitly characterize the death-wail of the intelligible freedom. It was excogitated by Kant to rescue the will from the causal necessity of the world of phenomena; it becomes

in Schopenhauer's hands the foundation of a system of Determinism, in which, if the name freedom is still preserved, it is only to express the groundless manifestation of a blind force, that discloses itself in the thought and life and being of the world we know, establishing always, whether in man or in matter, a determinate character, which intellect may bring to light but which it can neither alter nor destroy. This so-called will is a one-sided development of the intelligible world in the Kantian system. It lacks the rational element, in virtue of which the noumenal character is a law unto itself. But it is not only in opposition to Kant's philosophy, it is also contradicted by the facts of our own consciousness. We are conscious of a will that is accompanied by ideas, which, considered in relation to a volition, may be called its motives. But an unknown force that moves at random into determinate existence, blindly manifesting itself now in this direction and now in that, without the guidance of knowledge or any light of reason, has nothing in common with that which we call will, and the application of that name can only lead to confusion of thought, which no apparent comprehensiveness of treatment can escape or conceal. A will that precedes intellect is no will; it can be at best but blind desire.

But if Schopenhauer's additions to Kant are of a suspicious character, his developments of Kant are essentially logical and consistent. He brought out clearly all that lay in germ in the doctrine of intelligible and empirical character. And, as we have seen, it turns at his touch into a system of Determinism. The starting-point with him as with Kant is the assertion that the intelligible or noumenal will is not, like the empirical

will, subject to the conditions imposed by the intuition of time. Empirical volitions, as falling in time, constitute a succession, the members of which, according to Kant, are causally related to other events in time. Taking a concrete case, it may be said that the resolve of the Russian Nihilists to blow up the Winter Palace was as necessarily determined by the preceding acts and events of their lives, as the explosion itself by the lighting of the match, the firing of the train, and the other circumstances which made up the totality of its causation. And as the like must hold of every act of will, from the first of their volitions up to the moment of that fatal resolve, it would seem apparent that the theory makes no provision for freedom, however desperately it clings to the name. The case is clear: everything that falls in time is caused by what has already happened in time; volitions occur in time; *ergo*, volitions are determined. From this conclusion there would seem to be no escape; and Schopenhauer maintains that Kant was not in earnest in his attempt to evade it.* Certain it is, that Kant at times assigns a *rôle* to the empirical character that excludes the possibility of freedom. "It is according to this alone," he says, "we regard man, when we wish merely to observe, and, as in Anthropology, to inquire physiologically into the moving causes of his action." (iii. 381.) If the moving causes of man's actions are thus determined, what place have we left for an intelligible causality? Even more explicit is the following: "The real morality of actions (desert and guilt), even that of our own conduct, remains wholly concealed from us. *To the empirical character alone can we refer our accountability.*" (p. 381, *note.*) Accordingly, not only

* *Grundprobleme der Ethik*, p. 71.

our observation but our judgment of conduct as well must proceed upon the empirical basis. The judge on the bench, not less than the physiological psychologist must ignore the intelligible character. But then, when the one has analyzed a crime into its determinants, it is not easy to see why the other should sentence the culprit, whose only guilt is the misfortune of having been the meeting-point of the contending forces, the successive developments of which were determined by their antecedents, and by these alone. Kant sought to turn the edge of such objections, and doubtless succeeded, but only by involving himself in contradiction. Rather than surrender freedom, as his doctrine of causality requires, he predicates of some acts at least a causation partially, if not wholly, originating in the intelligible character. This view we may briefly examine before passing to others; for Kant attempted, in more than one way, to form a conception of how freedom or the causation of the intelligible character was really operative.

That the view just stated was not altogether in consonance with his critical results Kant seems to have been aware, if we may attach any significance to the unusual caution with which he expresses himself: "Sometimes we find or think that we find," he circumspectly observes, "that the ideas of reason have a real causality in the phenomenal conduct of men, and that their actions are determined not by empirical causes, no, but by grounds of reason." (p. 381.) In the note from which we have already quoted he virtually surrenders this exclusive causality of reason, remarking that no one can fathom how much is due to the action of freedom, how much merely to nature and to favourable or unfavourable temperament and constitution. But if, as Kant is never

wearied of reminding us, "all human actions are determined according to the order of nature by the empirical character and the co-operating conditions," and if from these they "might with certainty be foretold and necessarily deduced" (p. 380), is it not a work of supererogation to seek any other causality for them, a contradiction to assign it to a sphere above "the order of nature," and an impossibility to conceive its action upon what is already unchangeably determined without it? Yet it is just this that Kant attempts. Surely a curious task for the critical philosopher!

It might, however, have been avoided had Kant at the outset only made clear to himself the full import of his Copernican notion. For if the mind legislate for nature and create from its categories, intuitions and feelings the world we know, is it not evident that the mind itself cannot be conditioned by the conditions it imposes on things? As you cannot predicate of the spider the geometrical relations he has spun in net-work round him, neither can you apply to mind the categories it has set in the loom of time as warp for the weaving of an intelligibly-patterned world. Causality is a relation of things,—a thought-bond between two objects, but it has no meaning when applied to thought itself, by which things are made and constituted what they are. And this view, which is implicit in Kant's principles, though dumbly articulated by Kant himself, is also the view of the natural consciousness of mankind. Unbiassed men do not identify, as Schopenhauer did, volition and causation. Whoever reflects that a motive is merely an idea, and that an idea has no existence apart from the subject that has it, must object to the comparison of man and his motives to a balance and its weights. The former is a

merely ideal, the latter a real duality. Man is nothing apart from his ideas; but the weights and the balance have each an independent existence. Thus volition or willing according to motives is by no means necessitation. And it was here that Kant failed to see the full significance of his fundamental notion, while contending for an empty shadow which was scarcely even the ghost of our living freedom. If freedom be not found in our volition *with* motives and not without them, it dwells not with man, it is nowhere to be found.

But to return from this digression. We have seen that the intelligible character cannot co-operate in the production of actions, which are wholly grounded in the empirical character. There is, however, a second conception of their relation by which Kant hopes to save the freedom of the will. Grant that human actions are the necessary consequences of the empirical character, determined by it as uniformly as any effect in nature by its cause, what then is this empirical character itself? May it not be the freely-caused product of the intelligible? And Kant, as we have seen, calls it the manifestation, the sensuous schema of the intelligible, and its causality "the effect of the intelligible causality." But from this account Schelling and Schopenhauer have drawn the only admissible inference, which, as is well known, was directly the reverse of Kant's. At every moment of our lives we have an empirical character which determines our conduct and excludes freedom. To protect freedom we excogitate an unconditioned causality of the intelligible character, but that carries us out of this life, for which alone morality, and therefore freedom, have any worth or interest. Kant would of course remind us that the intelligible character is not subject to the conditions

of time, and cannot therefore be assigned to a life that precedes this life. To which there is but one reply: the logic of facts thrusts it out of this life. So long as we have an empirical character, which is the ground of all our actions, so long must we assert they are determined; and as the empirical character is ours from the beginning of our lives, so must its supposed cause—the freely-acting intelligible character—fall without the limits of our earthly life. And Schelling, who also maintains that the intelligible character precedes the empirical merely according to its notion and not in order of time, really draws no other conclusion; for he transfers freedom from the earthly sphere back to the creation of the world, at which time we, by an act of our own volition, determined the character of our being and the course of our lives. To add that creation is a timeless act, an eternal now, is merely to play with words. Besides, if, as Schelling asserts, neither Judas himself nor any one else could have prevented his betrayal of Christ, is it not manifest that the creation, in which Judas took to himself his definite character, was not the work of that moment, must have preceded that moment, and in so far, therefore, was not timeless and eternal. This unavoidable inference from Kant is clearly stated by Schopenhauer, though with him too we are asked to believe that our character was determined by the manifestation of a blind will, which, as preceding intellect, falls outside the conditions of our knowledge, and hence is not in time. But worthless as the metaphysic of Schelling and Schopenhauer may be, both agree in one important truth, that Kant's distinction between intelligible and empirical character cannot deliver this earthly life from the bonds of necessity.

A third view, though not independent of the preceding,

appears in Kant. If the intelligible character cannot, as we have seen, descend from its transcendental height to aid in the determination of specific actions; and if, further, its causation of the empirical character, whence our actions flow, must fall outside this present life, with which alone ethics is concerned, might not freedom still find a sheltered place on the "other side" of actions, which in themselves are phenomenally necessary? In short, what in the empirical character is precisely determined and absolutely necessary may be in the intelligible character free and unconditioned. The necessity of the one may not exclude the freedom of the other. The action, in so far as it is to be attributed to the intelligible character or pure reason, does not follow the empirical laws in accordance with which both condition and consequence appear in our experience; but it takes its place in the series of our actions, while its conditions remain unchangeable in the transcendental sphere beyond. The change has been brought forth by the intelligible character without implying any change in it. For the condition, which has its seat in reason, is not sensuous and does not therefore begin to be. Accordingly we here find, what we miss in all empirical series, that the condition of a successive series of events, can itself be empirically unconditioned. Without undergoing change in itself, it is the cause of the sensuous condition by which a series of actions is brought on the stage.

Now without denying the possibility of this causation, we have only to remark that there is no field left open for it, if, as Kant has shown, *all* actions are *fully* and *completely* determined by their antecedents in time. Only when our inquiry into the causes of an action stops

with its conditions, and does not press back into *their* causes, can such a view gain any plausibility. On extending our investigation it would be seen that the "sensuous condition," which is supposed to mediate between the empirical events and the transcendental causality, is the product of certain events that precede it in time,—the product, that is, of the empirical character, and no more connected with the intelligible sphere than the action it was excogitated to explain. And if we are not too slothful to follow back the course of our lives, we find, from the present time to the first beginnings of action, a like causal relation between our conduct and our empirical character.

Freedom was to be saved by the union of the intelligible and empirical character in every action, and yet we find it impossible to conceive such a combination!

Nevertheless, Kant clings to his notion of freedom. But it is after all only a barren abstraction. A will that begins from itself a series of events, without motives, does not differ from caprice, and it is scarcely conceivable that anyone should attach much worth to it. But Kant's age was an age of Illumination, of one-sided abstractions. It was an epoch of transition, and Kant's philosophy has not escaped the contradictions immanent to all Becoming. As it attempted to cancel the Idealism that emerged from the Critique of Knowledge by binding the phenomenal world we know to a noumenal world of which we know nothing, not even that it exists, so it endeavours to save human freedom, which it had hunted out of the actual world, by sheltering it behind an intelligible character, which has no other foundation for its being than that fiction of a noumenal world. An object can be analyzed into a manifold of sense ordered

and arranged under certain intuitions and categories. A human action is shown to be the determined result of preceding conditions. But in neither case, according to Kant, is that the end of the matter. You must regard the object as produced by something behind it,—as a manifestation or effect of a thing-in-itself. And the action, which the empirical character determined, you must regard as freely caused by an unconditioned reason.

Now without denying that Realism and Idealism, Freedom and Necessity, are as a matter of fact capable of being united in one system, we must nevertheless assert that Kant has failed to accomplish this. His world is an ideal world, and his attempted passage to Realism is a leap and not a necessary or even natural transition. Similarly is Determinism the logical consequence of his Metaphysics, and Indeterminism is introduced only at the sacrifice of unity and consistency. Doubtless our natural belief in the reality of the objective world, and our not less firm conviction of our own freedom, are facts that require explanation; but that is not given by a system that relegates both reality and freedom to a transcendental sphere, which has no conceivable connexion with this actual world in which we believe they both exist, and which can enter into no connexion with it, without involving the whole system in hopeless contradiction.

This leads us to the last objection we have to make to Kant's doctrine of the intelligible and empirical character, —an objection that applies to each and all the interpretations that may be given it. In every case freedom is supposed to be saved by attributing a causality to the intelligible character or pure reason. But the central point of Kant's philosophy is that the Categories have no validity beyond the sphere of phenomena. It is therefore

meaningless to maintain that the intelligible character has any causality, whether in relation to the empirical character in general, or to the specific acts that are determined by it. Kant here falls into the same contradiction as when he postulates a noumenal world as cause of our sensations, though the category of causality has no application till the sensations have been constituted by thought into the phenomenal world of our knowledge. In both cases the quest of an Absolute,—of an unconditioned first cause is fruitless.

The distinction between the intelligible and empirical character fails of the end for which it was made. It is, however, the natural issue of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, —but the issue of its weakness and not of its strength. Its source is the dualism of phenomenon and noumenon; its dynamic impulse the theory of causation. It is these that doomed Kant's Critique to Determinism;—these, and not the immanent principles of the Critical Philosophy. To them we must attribute the result at which we have now arrived. That result is, that for Kant no transition was possible from the theoretical to the practical philosophy. Necessity is the outcome of the one, freedom the burden of the other. And it is impossible to effect a reconciliation between them.

2. *Freedom of the Will.*

When the bond of connexion between the theoretical and the practical philosophy has been broken, two courses are open to speculation. It may fasten on one part of the system to the exclusion of the other, or it may hold by both, though seeking beyond Kant the principle of their union. In the last case the contradiction subsisting between causality and freedom would be set aside by a

juster conception of these categories themselves. It would be seen that the ego, which legislates for nature, is itself above the reach of natural laws. Thought cannot be caught in the diamond-net it has thrown for things. A sound theory of knowledge will show that the laws of Nature are not the laws of Spirit. And if Kant failed us here, we shall nevertheless find that Kant's principles, when duly developed, free us from the contradictions into which Kant himself fell.

But this course has not always been followed; and there have not been wanting thinkers who, staying themselves on the Critique of Knowledge, entirely reject the Critique of Morality and Religion. This is the general attitude of the so-called Neo-Kantians, of whom Lange may be taken as the representative. Professing to build on the theoretical philosophy of Kant (though, as we think, without its foundation), Lange asserts that "the entire practical philosophy is the changeable and perishable part of the system.* Between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* he sees nothing but contradiction. The one moves in a world of appearances, the other in a world of realities; the one binds phenomena in the changeless bonds of necessity, the other sets noumena under a self-given law of freedom. In that our scientific knowledge is placed on a firm foundation; in this it is exposed to the caprices of the will. Here the limits which were there set to knowledge are overstepped; the death-warrant signed against metaphysics is countermanded.

The existence of contradiction we do not deny. We have already hinted how it may be avoided. But granting everything for which Lange contends (though much

* *Geschichte des Materialismus*, ii. 61 (3rd edition).

might be refuted from Kant himself), does it therefore follow that the ethical philosophy must be rejected? Does the truth lie exclusively in one Critique? Or may there not be truths in both parts of the system, which, if well understood, are perfectly accordant? But even though we are unable to detect this inner harmony, we are not on that account released from the claims of either on our reason. Lange makes this possible for himself by relegating the facts of the moral and religious consciousnesss to a "world of fiction," which, as we are told to our surprise, constitutes at once their "worth and dignity."* But this is no philosophy, it is sheer despair of philosophy. Kant attempted to explain *all* the facts of our consciousness, while Lange has contented himself with a partial survey, which leaves unexplored one large sphere, that, on his own showing, is "the source of all that is high and holy" in humanity.† He may, if he choose, call that world a fairyland of fiction and find it strange that Kant had not fallen on so happy a name; but the world itself will still need a philosophical explanation, just as much as that other world of nature, than which perhaps it is rather more than less real. And Kant's explanation cannot be affected by the dogmatism of the new school. Indeed we believe the Neo-Kantians to be grossly inconsistent. For does not the philosophy which leads to causality lead as inevitably to freedom? Both notions stand on precisely the same level; the deduction of the one is as valid as the deduction of the other. The method of the practical philosophy is the method of the theoretical philosophy. In the first place, each sets out with an accepted fact,—here the fact of

* *Geschichte des Materialismus*, ii. 61 (3rd edition).

† *Ibid.*

duty, there the fact of knowledge. Secondly, each seeks a general formula for the concise expression of the fact. Thirdly, each proposes to explain the possibility of the fact as contained in the formula. Fourthly, each finds that the universality and necessity of the fact are inexplicable from experience. Fifthly, each is accordingly obliged to posit an *à priori* element, which, not preceding experience in order of time, is yet not given in experience. Sixthly, each having shown this *à priori* factor is the only possible hypothesis, delivers a result that we cannot refuse to accept, without showing a fallacy either in the premises or in the argument. Accordingly, to accept the notion of causality and to reject that of freedom is only possible to a one-sided system, such as that which Lange gives. Instead of closing the path to the practical philosophy, he simply passes by it, and offers certainly no resistance to our entrance. Here we are to seek the freedom which the theoretical philosophy necessarily excluded, but which it nevertheless discerned as the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

For the thorough understanding of Kant's treatment of the question a brief sketch of his ethical philosophy is necessary. We must of course confine ourselves to the merest outline.

In the analysis of morality as of knowledge he sets out with a truth of universal and necessary validity. In the one case it is the body of mathematical proofs, in the other it is the moral law. In both the inquiry turns on the possibility of such propositions, which are at once synthetic and *à priori*. Confining attention to the moral law, it is evident that it cannot be constituted by practical principles which prescribe action for the attainment of an

end. For the maxim of conduct would then be merely the desire of an object, or the pleasure in the existence of it. But since this pleasure in an object, which must be presupposed as a condition preceding our volition, cannot be known *à priori*, it would follow that the maxims of our conduct were always *à posteriori*, and therefore incapable of becoming law for all reasonable beings. Or, in Kant's words, "a material principle can never yield a practical law."* Such material principles, however different in other respects, agree in this, that they belong to one general system of Eudæmonism and rest on self-love. But a system, the principles of which turn on one's own happiness, no matter how intellectually soever the understanding may be employed on it, can never furnish any further motives to moral conduct than such as excite and stimulate the inferior powers of desire. Either then a superior power of desire is to be abandoned, or else reason must itself be a practical or active faculty, *i.e.*, such a one as can by the bare form of its rule determine a volition, and that abstracted from all feelings of the agreeable or disagreeable which may follow or compose the matter of choice. But to deny man this higher power of reason is to degrade him to the level of the brutes, which are guided by the light of instinct alone. The only question, therefore, is, how we can conceive of reason as determinator of the will. Only one way is possible. "If a rational being cogitate his maxims as practical laws of universal validity, he can do so only when his maxim is not by its matter but by its form the determinator of the will."† Were the will determined by the matter, *i.e.*, by the end or object desired, it would be dependent on the relation subsisting between

* *Werke*, v. 22. † v. 28.

the feelings of pleasure and pain and the end represented. But since this is different in different individuals, and even in the same individual at different times, since, in a word, it is *à posteriori*, it is unfit for a practical law binding on all reasonable beings. Hence, as has been stated, only the form remains as determinator of the will. If, then, the subjective principles or maxims of a rational being are to fit themselves in a code of moral legislation, they must be capable of adaptation to universal law, or, what we have now seen to be equivalent to this, they must determine the volition not by their content but by their form.

Thus the first condition of the moral law has been found; it is a will that is determined by a formal, as distinguished from a material principle. But what now is the character of such a will? It is clearly independent of the causal law by which phenomena in the external world are connected. For, since the abstract form of law *in genere* is cogitable by the force of reason alone, it is in no way presented to the senses, and so no phenomenon occurring in space and time; and the idea of it, considered as a determinator of will, is wholly different in kind from the determination of phenomena in the physical world, where the determinator of a phenomenon is, by the law of the causal nexus, itself also a phenomenon. Now this independence of the law of cause and effect and of the mechanism of the physical system is *freedom* in the strictest sense of the word. Hence a will, whose only law is the legislative form of its maxims, is a free will. The converse is similarly demonstrable, namely, that a free will cannot be determined by anything but the legislative form of the law.

Thus freedom and unconditional practical law re-

ciprocally point to one another. They may indeed be merely two sides of the one thing. An unconditional law may be regarded as the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, and this is quite identical with freedom. But our knowledge begins with the practical law and not with freedom. If it be asked, how we arrive at the consciousness of the moral law, the answer is the same as in the case of any other proposition *à priori*, namely, that we are conscious of a practical law *à priori* as we are conscious of theoretical ones, by attending to the necessity with which reason obtrudes them on the mind; and, by separating from them all *à posteriori* conditions, we arrive from the first at the idea of a pure will, as from the last at the idea of a pure understanding. Thus freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, and the moral law the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. Man judges he can do this or that act because he is conscious he ought to do it. The law says: "So act that the maxims of thy will might become law in a system of universal moral legislation." Our consciousness of this fundamental law is an ultimate fact of reason, thrust upon the mind directly as a synthetic *à priori* proposition, without basis in any perception whatsoever. It is given as an apodictic certainty, even though in actual experience no example of its perfect observance can anywhere be met with. This universal law is the spontaneous product of practical reason or will. Autonomy of the will is, therefore, the only possible foundation of morality. Every other principle (Heteronomy) not only cannot found laws of necessary obligation and universal extent, but is in fact subversive of all morality. The only escape from hedonistic egoism is through the autonomy of the will. To satisfy its universal law I extend my private selfish choice

of happiness and make the happiness of all a principle of conduct. This satisfies the demand of reason, and gives to what would otherwise be a merely selfish maxim a qualification fitting it for law. A law requiring me to promote universal happiness is therefore quite independent of the supposition that happiness is the choice of all sentient creatures, for it rests on its own formal universality.

The analysis of morality has led to the discovery of the autonomy of the will. The moral volition is determined by a law which issues spontaneously from the practical reason. It must now be added that the essence of all worth in acting consists in this, that the moral law be the immediate, the only determinator of the will. But how that is possible we must at the same time express our inability to explain. However, if the determinative force of the moral law be granted, it may be shown *à priori* what it effects, or rather, what it must effect on the mind. The characteristic of the determination of will by the moral law lies in this, that it, as free will, be determined not only without any co-operation from sensitive excitements, but actually in defiance of these whenever they infringe upon the law. Now what weakens feeling must itself be feeling: hence we see *à priori* that the moral law, the ground determining the will, must produce a feeling when it circumscribes or discards such sensuous solicitations. The aggregate of appetites against which the moral law makes its way may be brought under the general appellation of selfishness, which consists either in self-love or self-conceit. The law limits the former; it totally excludes the latter. The general result is to make self-esteem depend on morality. And the law by contrast with the appetite it invades and

weakens, or even entirely destroys, becomes an object of reverence, that is, it is the ground of a positive feeling, which is derived from no empirical source, and which can be recognized *à priori*. "Reverence for the moral law is thus a feeling, caused by an intellectual ground, and is the only feeling capable of being recognized *à priori*, or whose necessity we are able to comprehend."* It is not a motive to morality, but morality itself considered subjectively as a motive; inasmuch as by it the practical reason silences the sensuous appetencies and makes an inlet for advancing the authority of the law.

After this explication of our moral conceptions, duty may be defined as "the necessity of an act out of reverence for the law."† It contains, as subordination to law, no pleasure, but rather dislike to that extent to the act itself; while yet, on the other hand, since this restraint is enforced solely by the legislation of man's own reason, it brings with it a feeling of exaltation. It connects us with an order of things unapproached by sense, into which the force of reason can alone pierce. Beneath this supersensible lies the phenomenal system, wherewith man has only a fortuitous and contingent connexion. As an inhabitant of both systems he cannot fail to venerate his higher nature, and to regard its laws with the profoundest reverence. He is no doubt unholy enough, but the humanity inhabiting his person must be holy; and in submission to this consists his duty. In virtue of this duality in man's nature, the moral law has the form of an Imperative. Reason commands sense. Man as *phenomenon* receives the law, man as *noumenon* gives it.

But the pure will or practical reason, which is determined solely by the moral law, aims at the realization of

* *Werke*, v. 79. † iv. 248.

the highest good. Now for beings that are at once rational and sentient the highest good must consist, not only in virtue, but in happiness as well. These, since they are both objects of the moral will, cannot be contradictory. They must be capable of union. Since, however, they are not identical, as from very different standpoints Stoics and Epicureans maintained, their union must be synthetic and not analytic. Either then the desire of happiness must produce the maxims of virtue, or the maxims of virtue must produce happiness. The first supposition is impossible, because, as we have seen, maxims that place the motives of the will in the desire of happiness are not moral, and supply no basis for virtue. The alternative, at first sight, appears not less impossible, for as the moral agent is not the cause of the world, on the laws of which his happiness is dependent, how can he be assured that his virtue shall meet with its appropriate reward—with the happiness proportioned to it? And yet he is charged by practical reason with the realization of the highest good, which implies precisely this adjustment. Now as reason cannot lay upon us a task for the fulfilment of which the conditions are wanting, we are obliged to posit a ground for the harmony of nature and morality, which, it is manifest, can be none other than the author of them both. We become thus morally certain of the existence of God. Similarly the immortality of the soul must be postulated as a condition to the attainment of that perfect virtue which constitutes the supreme factor in the "highest good."

This brief outline of Kant's practical philosophy, however imperfect, will have shown the chief features of the system, and the solution offered for the perennial problems of moral speculation. Its worth we must now

attempt to appreciate. That it is not in harmony with the theoretical philosophy, that its very possibility is excluded by this, we have already seen in considering the doctrine of intelligible and empirical character. At present, however, we are not to deal with its compatibility or its incompatibility with any other part of the Kantian system; we have merely to examine into its validity as a theory of the facts of our moral consciousness. For that purpose we may turn first of all to the account given of the freedom of the will, and then to the moral principle itself as formulated in the Categorical Imperative.

To ascertain exactly what Kant means by will is a most perplexing problem. Among the numerous faculties into which the critical philosophy has analyzed our mental activity, this has sometimes an independent position, though at other times it is almost, if not wholly, identified with reason. Perhaps, in general, reason might be defined as the faculty of principles or ideas; practical reason as the faculty that determines the will by these principles or ideas; and will as the faculty of acting according to them.* But though there is abundant ground for such a distinction, the evidence against it is not less convincing. Undoubtedly it is asserted, that nature has endowed us with reason to the end that we may produce a good will; and that reason determines the will immediately by a practical law, not mediately through an emotion.† And Kant would even seem to have pictured to himself the relation between the two faculties by the aid of an illustration from mechanics. "The will," he says, "lies in the middle between its formal *à priori* principle [contained in reason] and its

* *Werke*, v. pp. 45, 52; and iv. 288.

† iv. pp. 241-244; and v. pp. 25-26.

material motives, as it were on a cross-road."* Or if W be the point in which two lines F and M meet, then we may, by the foregoing, conceive W to be the will and F and M the two forces of reason (or form) and sense (or matter). But in spite of this graphic representation by which reason and will are so sharply distinguished, Kant does in other passages really identify them. Thus he speaks of a "pure will, or, what is just the same, pure practical reason."† And though he had said that the will took its law from reason, his first ethical treatise ends with the autonomy of the will, *i.e.*, "the faculty of will by which it is a law to itself."‡ Still more wonderful is the following: "A reasonable being has the faculty of acting according to the representation of laws, or according to principles, that is to say, a reasonable being has a will. Since for the deduction of action from laws reason is required, it follows that will is nothing else than practical reason."§ In the one of these two sentences a distinction between will and reason is implied, in the other their identity is explicitly stated. And as it is not conceivable that so consistent a thinker as Kant should contradict himself in a single passage, we must expect to find here the key to the solution of our problem.

It will be seen that the identification of reason and will is mediated by the notion of action. Will is the

* *Werke*, iv. 248. † v. 58. ‡ iv. 288.

§ The confusion reaches its climax in the following passage of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (v. 58): "Apart from the relation in which the understanding (*Verstand*) stands to objects (in theoretical knowledge), it has also a relation to the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), which, on that account is called will, and pure will, in so far as the pure understanding (which in such case is called reason) is by the bare representation of a law constituted practical."

faculty of *acting* according to the idea of law; reason is required for the derivation of *action* from laws; hence, it is asserted, will is nothing else than practical reason. Inasmuch as the action and the law of reason are the only perceivable elements in the process, Kant seems to have regarded it as entirely gratuitous to postulate a faculty standing between them as a cause of the action, especially as we cannot any better understand how a law should determine this imaginary will than that it should immediately and directly produce an action. We have the law, and we have or should have the action; but their connexion presents a difficulty which the postulating of a will only hypostatizes but does not explain. Hence though he retains the name of will, it is only to express the fact of acting according to reason; and if, as sometimes occurs, "faculty" is substituted for "fact," that can only be regarded as a return to popular conceptions. Will, for Kant, is nothing more than the correlate on the active side of the law on the theoretical side. It could have no existence without reason, but reason is not in any way conditioned by it. We might easily enough conceive that reason was only theoretical, *i.e.*, that it was merely passively conscious of itself and of its object; will indicates that it is practical or active as well, *i.e.*, that it realizes itself in its object. Kant, in his definition of will, carefully confines the name to such appetition as is determined by reason alone.* And, elsewhere, he calls it "a kind of causality of living beings in so far as they are rational;" and again, summing up all we have said, he names it "a causality of reason."†

The essential correctness of this interpretation of Kant's doctrine of the will is confirmed by the develop-

* *Werke*, vii. 11. † iv. pp. 294, 306.

ment of his philosophy. Hegel, who, according to Dr. Stirling, is generally anxious to hide the sources of his system, confesses in this respect his obligations to Kant; and Hegel defines will as a "peculiar kind of thinking."* Now if we recollect that thought in the Kantian system cannot be peculiar to any individual (though Kant himself may have conceived it thus), but that it must be a transcendental self-consciousness, that makes the individual a universal, it will appear that Hegel has drawn for us the consequences of Kant's identification of reason and will in the following passage:—"Whether man know it or not," he says, "the essence of self-consciousness realizes itself as an independent power, in which the single individuals are only moments."† If the individual will has shrivelled into nothingness at the grasp of universal reason, then it is true, as Hegel affirms, that while "the Spirit has reality the individuals are its accidents."‡

But such a result following from Kant's account of will and reason cuts away the only ground there was for postulating a will or supposing that reason was practical. For if reason develops itself in the world, whether through human beings or apart from them, but at all events without their co-operation, then they as mere moments and accidents cannot be charged with the execution of an unconditioned duty, which is at once futile and absurd. Thus the Categorical Imperative or moral law falls away, and with it the ground on which that Hegelian inference was based. Kant's conception of will is accordingly not consonant with the foundations of his system. We have now to add that it is at variance

* Hegel's *Werke*, viii. pp. 33, 173.

† *Ibid.* p. 313.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 215.

with common sense. For the natural consciousness of the unphilosophical, will is no more practical reason than it is practical imagination or practical sensation. It is the faculty of consciously choosing among motives, from whatever source they come, and of acting upon them. "The will of man," says Schiller, with a side-glance at the Critical Philosophy, "is a sublime conception, even when abstraction is made of its moral use. The mere will alone raises man above the brutes, the moral will elevates him to the Divinity."* It is desire with full-orbed eye of reason. It is thus the ground for distinction between acts that we perform and events that merely happen. It belongs to the inmost centre of our being, and, as it is the pledge of our individuality, so is it the primal energy, of which we are directly conscious, but of which we can give no more description than of a colour or a sound. Now in the Kantian system this will appears as twain. So far as it is determined by reason it is the pure will; so far as it has other springs it is the empirical will, and stands on the same footing as any other object in the phenomenal world. In spite of some ambiguous passages, it must be maintained that neither of these wills is the seat of energy or causative force of any kind. The one is moved by reason, or still better, the one *is* reason; the other is impelled by sense, just as a ball is driven by a blow. And as the former robs us of our individuality by transmuting us into passive moments of the Absolute, so the latter does violence to our personality by assimilating us to the things of the material world. A will that *wills* anything is no part of the system.

* *Ueber Anmuth und Würde: Werke*, xi. 278 (Edition Cotta, 1867).

If this be Kant's conception of will, we cannot be surprised by the assertion that "freedom must be postulated as a property of the will of every rational being."* For since will is nothing else than practical reason, and since reason cannot receive any foreign bias in forming its judgments without becoming the creature of extraneous impulse and as such ceasing to be reason, it must regard itself as the sole author of its own principles, or, as practical reason, must regard itself as free. Nevertheless, Kant's position with regard to this subject is not beyond criticism.

Will, it has been seen, is a causality of reason; and it is on this category that the conception of freedom is also based. In the material world an effect is produced when the cause is determined to put forth its efficiency by the operation of an agent acting upon it. After a ball has been struck by the bat, motion follows as effect. Since the ball cannot of itself change its position, but must wait for the impinging force to move it, this may be called heteronomy of causation. On the other hand, autonomy of causation implies an activity which begins from itself alone a manifestation of its energy. A ball that sets itself in motion may be taken as a physical illustration. And it is well to insist on a material image, for Kant had evidently some such before his mind. By a free will he means a self-active will. The difference between the causality of will and mechanical causality, regarded from this standpoint, is that the former lacks one of the elements or agents of the latter, the place of which is taken by the self-originating power of will. But in addition to the elements that make up any specific case of causation there is always to be added the law

* *Werke*, iv. 295.

of their operation. For any given body, the relation between motion and impinging force bears always a constant ratio, which may be determined with the accuracy of a mathematical law. If, now, the impinging force be set aside and the ball supposed self-active, as in autonomy of causation, it might still be conceived to move as regularly as before. By analogy, therefore, will might be described as a self-originating causality acting after definite laws. And Kant really gives this definition,* which not only follows from the foregoing analogy, but is merely the obverse side of the identification of reason and will. When these are one the law is merely regarded as the registration of a rational volition, whose origin and process admit neither of explanation nor comprehension. When, however, reason is distinguished from will, the law is figured as the product of reason and the determinator of the will. The energizing of the ego, which had just been taken for an inexplicable uncaused causality of the rational self, now appears as the effect wrought upon it in some more mysterious way by the moral law. The change of attitude is significant, and indicates very strikingly the perplexities brought about by applying to mind categories that are valid only for matter. The will is now to be conceived, not as self-active, nor yet as determined by motives, but as swayed by a law, which, according to the analogy with physical causation, should only express, but never influence, its mode of action and volition. And the new definition is, "a free will is just the same as a will subject (*unter*, not *nach*) to moral laws."†

Between these two definitions Kant must be said to waver. On the one hand, he pictures freedom as the

* *Werke*, iv. 275. † iv. 295.

active self-originating power of reason or will; on the other, as passive subjection to a self-given law; or, since the law is self-given, freedom may consist rather in the autonomous legislation than in the obedience to the law.

I. As to the first, it is manifestly dependent on the results of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, above and beyond the phenomenal world of our conscious experience, Kant postulated as source and ground of it a noumenal world, of which this was in some way the appearance. But, as we have pointed out, this distinction is made on an old dogmatic assumption at variance with the fundamental notion of the critical philosophy. There is no ground for separating the phenomenal from the noumenal world, when we decline, as the Kantian principle requires, to regard as existent what can only be described (in Mr. Spencer's language) as unknown and unknowable. If any distinction is then conceivable (though of course it cannot be actual), it will be between the formal transcendental unity of self-consciousness and the world which it has projected from itself. And it is in fact by the help of this distinction, as it were, of the noumenal creative from the phenomenal created element that Kant essays to efface the contradiction between freedom and necessity. Our phenomenal (*i.e.*, our known) world is subject to the law of necessary causation, which is not merely verified in experience, but also constitutive of it, and therefore as certain as the existence of the universe itself. By a law of reason, however, men think themselves free with regard to their volitions, which, as part of the phenomenal sphere, must nevertheless be subject to the causal nexus. In such a collision, as the notion of necessity stands secure, the objective validity of the idea of reason —that is, of freedom—becomes extremely doubtful. In

any case it is entirely incomprehensible how freedom is possible. To explain that would be equivalent to solving the insoluble mystery of pure reason becoming practical. One thing, however, is certain,—its *im*possibility cannot be demonstrated. If the moral law requires that freedom be postulated, though neither its possibility nor impossibility be susceptible of proof, philosophy has no other task than that of showing its true relation to the causal nexus, with which it seems to stand in direct opposition. And this is what Kant attempts. "Every rational being reckons himself, on the one hand, as intelligent in a world of reason, and only as efficient in this system does he call his causality a will. On the other hand, he is conscious of being a part of the physical system in which his actions can only be appearances or phenomena of that causality. As, however, the possibility of deriving them from it cannot be understood, we must regard them as determined not by it, but by other phenomena, namely, appetites and desires, which belong to the physical system."*

But this explanation, far from throwing any light on the difficulty, only brings it into greater prominence. As efficient in the supersensible system man has a causality of will, but as it cannot be seen how this produces his actions, they are simply ascribed to the causality of sensible phenomena. What need then of that pure will, on the activity of which freedom has been staked? Or how is it a causality at all? It may be granted with Kant that, were we merely members of the intelligible world, all our actions would tally with the autonomy of the pure will; or that, were we but pieces of the sensible world, all our actions would take place according to the

* *Werke*, iv. 301.

physical law of appetites and desires. It is further conceivable that the difference between these two spheres might give ground for an "ought"—for the legislation of the higher over the lower. But how that "ought," and the freedom it implies, can have any practical meaning, we are unable, on this theory, even to imagine. If every human action and volition is necessarily determined by other phenomena, as Kant uniformly asserts, is it not futile to maintain a freedom of the will that can express itself only in a protest against the necessity by which it is encompassed? But Kant argues that this freedom is in reality an active factor, on the ground that the intelligible world, to which it belongs, is the ultimate ground and condition of the sensible world, in which the volition occurs. What happens in the phenomenal self, under the condition of time, is necessary; but the noumenal self, on which that other depends, is above the conditions of time, so that nothing precedes its voluntary act, and the entire series of the causally-related sensible existences is in the consciousness of its intelligible being nothing but the sequent of its free causality as noumenon. In one relation, therefore, the action may be fixed by mechanical necessity, but in another it is the direct product of reason, or it is free.

This hypothesis, which in another form we have already met in the doctrine of intelligible and empirical character, will be found, on closer examination, to offer no safeguard for human freedom. Because the noumenal world contains the last grounds of the phenomenal world as well as of its laws, it is argued that man, though conditioned in this, is in that free. Now, as already observed, the only noumenon which Kant, in accordance with his Copernican notion, was entitled to maintain, was the

transcendental unity of apperception, the permanent "I think," which through the categories laid the foundations of our known world. And this is not peculiar to me or to any other individual; it is universal thought itself. But the foregoing argument only shows that this universal, since it cannot in reality be conditioned by the laws it has established, is above the reach of the causal nexus, and so unconditionally free. And this is the inference which Schopenhauer drew. Of the individual ego, nothing whatever is asserted. With its content of feeling, volition and knowledge, it is, on the one hand, no mere empty thought, nor, on the other hand, is it simply a concrete thing in the physical system. And it is the recognition of this that is wanting in Kant's practical philosophy. His system would suffice were we either pure matter or pure thought; but, since we are neither, it never touches our case, and only seems to do so by swinging alternately from the one extreme to the other, without ever reaching a firm halting-place between them. If constitutive thought have set motives and volitions in the same category as force and motion, then the freedom of the will does not differ from the freedom of an impelled ball. And Kant does not in truth distinguish them in the phenomenal sphere. But as the causal relation is given by thought, he claims for man, along with submission to it, at the same time an exemption from it.

In such case Kant always conceives the individual ego as constitutive, each for itself, of the laws of the known world. Such a system of subjective Idealism, however, is not tenable; for it is impossible that individuals, with their manifold idiosyncrasies, should have created, each for itself, the world it knows *in common* with every other. And thus it was that the first develop-

ment of Kant's system began with the transcendental ego, which, after being universalized by Fichte, passed finally into the Absolute of Schelling and Hegel. If now the noumenal world, as thus understood, contains the grounds and conditions of the phenomenal world, it is not easy to see how the individual man, any more than the individual thing, can escape the grasp of necessity. It is true that, in so far as his will is rational, it would be in harmony with the laws of absolute reason, but that does not distinguish in any way cases of ordinary volition from causation. In short, no individual can break the causal bond in which, according to Kant, he as well as nature is bound. To say with Hegel that freedom consists not in liberty of choice but in willing the rational, may be a right enough usage of terms, but it throws no light on the problem before us. We want to know if the man who, incited by a greed of gain, steals his neighbour's purse, was as much impelled to that action by that motive as a ball, when struck, to move. The answer of critical philosophy must be considered an affirmative; although it adds, by way of solace, that man is free when he wills according to the universal laws of morality. It might, perhaps, be more correct to say that the man who wills the universal law, which reason gives, is one with reason, and that no higher goal can be set for humanity. But that offers not the slightest explanation of how man could come to that stage, how he could advance from what Kant would call the tyranny of motives to the freedom of perfect obedience. It is in this process that we suppose freedom to be operative, it is this that we cannot explain without freedom. The goal is worthy for its own sake, but not because we are then first free. Rather, to use Schelling's phrase, are we then sweetly bound by a

"holy necessity," from which we would not willingly be free to fall away. Meantime the goal has not been reached, and we are still striving towards it. The notions of guilt and desert, merit and demerit, responsibility and accountability, bear witness at once to our feebleness and our strength. That the theory we have examined can explain them, we are unable to see. It does indeed attempt to explain our conception of duty. But in regarding it as the voice of creative reason to the creature it has set among the things of the phenomenal world, dictating that something "ought" to be done, where already, in virtue of the laws it has established, something else must inevitably take place, it presents an hypothesis which, however meritorious in other respects, certainly does not show that freedom of the will is possible along with an all-embracing application of the law of causality. Doubtless the "ought" implies the "can," and our only objection to Kant's ethical philosophy is that it makes this implication impossible of realization.

Even when Kant's metaphysic be taken in the undeveloped form in which he left it, the result is practically the same. Suppose that I, the individual, have established the causal relation in the world I know, in particular that between motive and volition and that between force and motion. Does, *e.g.*, theft now follow necessarily a certain complex of motives, as the theory requires, then it is argued that this connexion, however necessary, is at the same time, since it has been made by me, really free and unconditioned. But this freedom, unless it implied a constant creation on the part of the subject—which in a completed Cosmos is impossible—has *already* been deposited with the groundwork of the existent world, by the forces of which my conduct is *now* alone determined.

At the dawn of consciousness, when the mind began to perceive, that is, to lay its categories in things, freedom may have been one of its attributes, but after that stage every act must be originated by the relations then established. Hence Schelling, with strict consistency, banishes freedom to a timeless creation, and delivers this life wholly over to necessity. As practical reason the ego issues an "ought," but as pure reason it has already grounded an "is," which no "ought" can alter or destroy. The supersensible world has already legislated us into the causal nexus, it cannot by a moral law legislate us out again. On this theory freedom must be held as a mere idea of reason, which, however valuable for the speculative thinker, has no worth or validity for the moral agent, and can have no bearing on our life and conduct, which follow necessarily the laws of the natural world. And in some striking illustrations Kant decidedly indicates this standpoint. Thus he says that the hardened ruffian, who, moved by some shining example of virtue, desires to become a good and honest man, finds he *cannot*, in consequence of the appetites and desires by which he is slavishly impelled. It is only, therefore, *in idea* that he wafts himself into another order of things, where motives have lost their sway, and the good will is all in all. Thither his fancy may soar, but he remains what natural causes have made him! It is, as Kant elsewhere tersely observes, only "*as if* through our will a system of things was to come into being."*

II. Along with the foregoing elucidation, which may be called metaphysical, Kant has a practical explanation of freedom, in accordance with which it consists in submission to the moral law. Or, since the moral law is

* *Werke*, v. 47.

given by the ego itself, freedom may be conceived to consist rather in the autonomy than in the subjection. Each aspect alternately comes to the foreground in Kant. At one time he says that "a free will is just the same thing as a will that is subject to moral laws," and defines practical freedom as "independence of the will from everything else except the moral law."* At another he maintains that "with the idea of freedom that of autonomy is indissolubly attached," and that the positive constituent in freedom is "the self-legislation of the pure and, as such, practical reason."† These different statements, however, are only two sides of the one fact. For true freedom, the theory requires both the self-given law and the obedience to the law; and if, at times, only one of these conditions is expressly stated, the other must be considered as tacitly assumed. There would be no freedom if the self-given law did not determine the will, none, if the law determining the will were not self-given. Kant's theory is impregnable so long as both these positions are secure; it falls when either has been surrendered. Regarding the autonomy of the will, something may be said when we come to treat of the moral principle; meantime, it may suffice, assuming the law, to inquire into its determination of the will. The theory requires that the bare form of the law, its adaptability to a system of universal legislation, shall be the only determinator of the moral will. But it will not need much consideration, as we think, to show that this condition is never fulfilled.

"The essence of all determination of will by the moral law lies," says Kant, "in this, that it as free will, be determined, not only without any co-operation from

* *Werke*, iv. 295; v. 98. † iv. 300; v. 35.

sensitive excitements, but that it even cast all such behind-back and discard them, in so far as they may infringe upon the law, and be determined by it alone."* But how this is at all possible, Kant confesses we are for ever unable to understand. *If*, however, it be possible, Kant can describe, *à priori*, the process by which the law humbles self-love and casts out self-conceit, till it win for itself absolute possession of the field as sole determinator of the will. But can we, however, grant the antecedent possibility? Kant of course would maintain we must, because on his theory morality is not otherwise explicable. Still, if the admission involves an absurdity, as we venture to think it does, it cannot be made; and the validity of a theory of morals requiring it must, to say the least, become suspicious. Now, is it not absurd to suppose that the rich and varied content of our moral life can be identified with the effect supposed to be produced upon us by the Categorical Imperative, since that effect could never, by any possibility, rise above the level of a monotonous uniformity? The law of duty as interpreted by Kant makes no provision for difference of any kind, and yet the substance of our moral conceptions is far from identical. The variety of their hues and colours is to be accounted for, not by mere matter, which in itself is colourless, and not by mere form, which alone is invisible, but by the reflexion of the one in and through the other. Kant too admits as undeniable, that "all volition has an object, that is, a matter;" but he straightway cancels the import of this admission by affirming that the object is not therefore "the ground of the determination of the will."† Now this addition is simply unintelligible; for we mean by an object of

* *Werke*, v. 77. † v. 37.

volition that which in some way, directly or indirectly, supplies a motive to the will, that is, in Kant's language, determines the will. It would, therefore, be more correct to say that the object in every case determines the will, and that the morality of the action is tested by its form, or its adaptability to universal law.

Kant himself, in a notable passage, concedes all that we require for the rejection of his view of freedom. It is, he says, "absolutely impossible to make out with certainty a single case in experience, in which the maxims of an otherwise dutiful action have rested solely on moral grounds and on the idea of duty."* That is to say, it is absolutely impossible to find a single instance in which occurs that transcendental determination by the moral law, without which freedom, on Kant's theory, is impossible!

The theory, further, is at variance with the moral notions and beliefs it was designed to explain. We are free, it is said, in obeying, solely for its own sake, a self-given law of reason; but since, confessedly, no human being ever does satisfy such condition, the freedom which it would secure him is never attained, and man must be regarded, like any material object, as the necessitated product of nature. A being that is pure reason alone is the only free being, according to the theory. The least intermixture of sense and imagination, as in man, is at once the mark and the cause of necessitation. But for the explanation of such moral notions as responsibility and punishment, merit and demerit, it was above all things essential to show that the agent is free in the very act for which he is blamed or approved. Were he determined, the good or bad act might have been admired or

* *Werke*, iv. 254.

disliked, but never rewarded or punished. Of moral conduct and moral principles Kant's practical philosophy gives, and can give, no explanation. His ethical system has two sides, one of which is applicable to pure reason, which is above duty, and the other to material things, which are beneath it. But for man, the only moral being we know, and for whom alone we need a philosophy of ethics, Kant's system has neither application nor validity.

After this somewhat lengthy examination of Kant's account of freedom, it cannot be difficult to appreciate its value. In so far as it is constructive, it fails in the attempt to reconcile ethics with a view of causality, which, to say the least, cannot be shown correct or even well-founded. Doubtless *if* the category of causality is valid for mind, it must be admitted that volitions and actions are inexorably determined. But what ground is there for applying to persons what we know only as true for things? There is in fact none whatsoever, except the unifying impulse we follow in our scientific research. That everything should stand under one category is doubtless an ideal for knowing, but it is not on that account a condition of being. The universe is under no obligation to adapt itself to a mere postulate of our cognitive method, even though it be, as it well may be, a system of rational relations. What *is*, even though its sole essence be reason, may nevertheless be richer and more varied than what we actually *know*. And from our ignorance of how freedom can be possible, it cannot be inferred that it is impossible. Indeed, in the present case, it is nothing less than a violation of the logical method of procedure, to deny that freedom is existent, when it is nevertheless the presupposition of the moral

law, of which we are immediately conscious. The masterly exposition of this relation between "ought" and "can" is perhaps the only permanent contribution which the critical philosophy has made to the problem of freedom. Man "judges he can do something because he is conscious he ought, and so recognizes in himself freedom, which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him." * Beyond this it will perhaps now be clear that Kant did not get in the solution of the problem; and, as we may venture to add, beyond this no one has yet advanced.

But even this position, it must be openly confessed, is not irrefragable. If duty, which according to Kant is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, be denied or explained away, there is absolutely no other ground for asserting that the will is free. If anyone can believe, with Professor Bain, that our morality is merely a system of police regulations, or, with Schopenhauer, that duty is "a notion for children and for nations in their infancy, but not for those who have made their own the culture of a maturely developed epoch,"—and experience shows that even this is not incredible to some acute thinkers,—then there is no ground for setting a limit to the unifying tendency of our cognitive method, seeing that spirit has renounced the characteristics by which we had supposed it exalted above the categories of nature. But to those who repudiate the unscientific procedure of Schopenhauer, and reject the hypothesis by which the Empirical School, after emptying morality of its contents, easily deprives the will of its freedom, the implication of duty, as developed by Kant, will remain the ground for belief in a freedom, which, if not further explicable, is not therefore

* *Works*, v. 32.

of doubtful existence, inasmuch as explanation is possible only through causal connexions, which by the hypothesis are here excluded. Freedom may be maintained, as we think, on this old and solid, but certainly unpretentious foundation;—assuredly on no other whatsoever.

If it is said that "the will only as thinking intelligence is free will,"* we have nothing to object, except that it in no way concerns the freedom of our popular consciousness or of our ethical systems—the freedom required for the explanation of duty and responsibility, of merit and demerit, of guilt and punishment. It is not a conception explanatory of morality—and it is that which we require—but a more or less probable view of the nature and dignity of man, whom it figures as fully adequate to his idea, when volition has been permeated with thought and the potential reason of the individual has been actualized into unity with the divine reason that develops itself in the world. But such a theory, whether advanced by Hegel or by the ancient Stoics, can gain nothing by slurring over the question of the freedom of the will, which remains untouched by the dictum, *in regno sumus, Deo parere libertas est*.

3. *The Moral Principle.*

Though the freedom of the will is the *ratio essendi* of our morality, and as such constitutes the supreme question of ethical speculation, morality, as Kant so emphatically reiterates, is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. Without a consciousness of the former there would never have been a belief in the latter. Our next inquiry must accordingly be into the nature of the moral conception, for the realization of which freedom has been postulated

* Hegel's *Werke*, viii. 55.

as an indispensable condition. What is duty? What is the moral law? Is it rightly formulated in Kant's Categorical Imperative? These questions lead us from the conditions of morality to its inmost essence and content.

Kant's interpretation of the moral law has already been given. To the dogmatic Eudaemonism of his contemporaries he opposed with overpowering energy a critical conception as clear and simple as it was new and startling. He maintained that the good will was the only absolute good, and that such a will was that, which had for its content and its spring an unconditioned law of universal validity. But such a law, it was argued, must be one from which all reference to the object or matter of our volition has been excluded,—one, that is, which by its bare form alone can determine the will. It is expressed as a Categorical Imperative: act from a maxim at all times fit for a universal law.

This conception of the moral will is closely related to the system of theoretic philosophy. As the pure forms of Intuition and of Understanding were discovered by abstracting from the content of our knowledge, so is the pure will reached by abstraction from the matter of our volition. And as through its spontaneity the understanding is distinguished from sense, so through its autonomy is the pure will lifted above desire or appetite. In the sphere of knowledge as of will, it is the self-activity of reason that raises us above the mere appearance and unreality, inherent in affections of sense, to the truth and reality of things as they are in themselves. Hence Kant's philosophy is in the main a determination of the functions of self-active reason, and is thus grounded in the question, How are synthetic judgments *à priori* possible? The answer, it is true, shows there is no *à*

priori knowledge, except with reference to objects of an at least possible experience, and that metaphysic therefore is impossible, seeing that our knowledge is confined to appearances, as constituted by the forms and conditions under which we know, and can never reach to reality,—to things as they are in themselves. If these cannot appear to us in any other way than through the forms of our perception, whereby they are *eo ipso* distorted, the sublation of the limit to our knowledge is only conceivable on the hypothesis, that beside the pure forms, the mind also supplied the matter of our knowledge, that is, that the mind possessed the faculty of intellectual perception. And though Kant rejects this supposition, yet not only the problem of his Critique but the whole tenor of the work itself show that his highest ideal of a science was one constructed from pure notions by the activity of thought, to the exclusion of every element of sense. It is because the theoretical reason does not escape its sensuous limitation that he denies to it a true knowledge of the really existent, and subordinates it to the practical reason, which through the moral law brings us into connexion with the world of reality. The supersensible, which cannot be known as an object, is to be realized in the moral life of the subject himself. As Socrates in despair of natural philosophy concentrates the force of his genius on the problems of moral speculation and practice, so Kant, become sceptical of a metaphysic that was incapable of explaining reality, takes refuge in an ethic in which it was at least to be experienced. Fichte following out the same line of thought arrived at the conclusion that the theoretical ego had no other *raison d'être* than the need felt by the practical ego for some opposition or resistance, by con-

tact with which it might carry on its infinite process of self-realization supposed to be demanded by the moral law. And the young titanic Schelling, kindled into enthusiasm by the fire of Fichte's genius, proposes to refute the dogmatism of the theoretical consciousness by "realizing in oneself a system which is the direct contrary of it."

But the realization of the supersensible by volition seems not less impossible than the comprehension of it in knowledge. For, since we never will without willing something, which as object of a possible experience does not lie on a plane different from that of our knowledge, no distinction like that supposed can be made between the two faculties. And least of all for Kant was any such admissible. What he urged against Leibnitz with such monotonous repetition in the theoretical philosophy must be brought against himself in the practical. That knowledge is impossible without a sensuous content, as he so cogently demonstrated, is not more obvious than that volition is inconceivable without desires or appetites as motives. Thought whether in knowing or willing is empty till filled by experience, though in both cases experience is blind till illuminated by thought. A true ethic as a true psychology must reconcile Rationalism and Empiricism, and it can only be considered as a defect that Kant did not carry into his ethical system the method by which, in the theoretical, he mediated so successfully between Locke and Leibnitz.

The inference from his principle cannot, however, be difficult to draw. If reason as theoretical produces only the forms of our perception, so must reason as practical be limited to the forms of our volition. Defining the matter of volition as the definite objects in view or the ends to

be attained, and the form as the universal rule we follow in the determination of ends, it is manifest that the material element in every volition can be given only in experience. From this source, however, cannot be derived a principle which is universal and necessary, and which raises us above the sensible, into communion with the supersensible world. The moral law can, therefore, have regard neither to the ends nor to the consequences of our actions, but only to the rules which precede them, to the form of the will from which they have issued. But as it is no empirical principle it cannot have a content; it is formal, and, as such, empty as the Categories or the Intuitions. Whatever is moral must conform to the Categorical Imperative; whatever is known to the category of causality; but that does not tell us what things are actually moral, or what causally related. Or the moral law might be compared with the laws of logic, which supply indeed a test of consistency, but not of truth. *If* A is true, not-A must be false; and *if* B is the maxim of your conduct, not-B cannot be willed to be a universal law. But in neither case is the condition established on which the consequence rests; and it is equally conceivable that not-A is true, and therefore A false, or that not-B is the maxim of your conduct, and B therefore unfit for universal law. But the point of supreme importance is to determine what is and what should be the principle of moral conduct. Here, however, the practical reason can give no information, since its very essence consists in being formal.

But if this be the ethical outcome of Kant's principles, he himself did not consistently abide by it. From the law, which, in virtue of its source, we have seen to be formal and empty, he attempts to deduce the system of

our rights and duties. The impossibility of such a derivation may be shown by considering the character of the law itself.

The Categorical Imperative begins with the notion of action. We are so to *act* that the maxims of our conduct may adapt themselves to universal law. Now an act is the translation by volition of a thought into reality, as, conversely, knowledge is the translation of reality into thought. The idea on the one hand is a mere state of our consciousness, the change in the world on the other hand is a mere event of nature. For action there is required a union of both through the will. A volition actualizes the idea. But this is impossible unless the idea to be realized is something definite, some particular end and no mere abstract principle. There can be no volition in general, no realization of a thought, whose universality stands directly opposed to the particularity of existent things. Now the Imperative is such an abstraction. It requires you to realize something, and yet gives you nothing that you can realize. And the will to which this Imperative addresses itself is likewise an abstraction. It is its essence to be formal, but the law requires you to materialize it, to give it a content, to contradict its essence. Only as formal is it good, and yet as good it ordains an activity which it cannot undertake without ceasing to be formal. Its object is the mastery of the sensuous nature, and yet it is defiled by any contact with sense. Such a pure will is, in short, a contradiction: as *will* it must have a definite content or matter for its activity, but as *pure* will it must be merely formal, that is, it can have no content.

The other element in the Categorical Imperative is that of conformability to universal law. The maxim on

which you act must adapt itself to a principle for others. But as anything you choose for your own maxim is susceptible of this universal application, so far as the law alone is to decide, we must say with Hegel that "there is nothing whatsoever which in this way could not become a moral law." * The law forbids you making any principle and the contradictory of it, at the same time, maxims of your conduct; but it does not prevent you choosing either one or the other of these two. Which it shall be, is left entirely undetermined. If deception be the maxim of your conduct, you must not will truthfulness for universal law; or if truthfulness be your maxim, deception cannot be willed as principle for others; but there is no way of determining from the law alone whether truthfulness or deception should be taken as starting-point. Suppose the question be put, "if, when in difficulty, I may not make a promise with the intention of not observing it;" then, says Kant, "I soon perceive, it is true, that I can will the lie, but not a universal law to lie, for then there could be no such thing as promising." † But what contradiction is there in the supposition that men have ceased to make and give promises? We set out to prove that promise-breaking is immoral, and we show that if universally adopted it would lead to the abrogation of promise-making. But why should there be promise-making? Though the absence of it might conflict with other conditions, it is certainly not forbidden by the formal law. Whatever of cogency the argument seems to carry with it, it derives from an illicit appeal to the consequences of actions in the real world,—by descending, that is, from the *à priori* sphere of thought to the *à posteriori* of experience. Only *if* promise-keeping be

* Hegel's *Werke*, i. 352. † *Werke*, iv. 250-251.

moral, does the law pronounce promise-breaking immoral. And the law itself is incapable of determining whether morality itself consist in promise-keeping or in promise-breaking. But the point of interest is precisely to show that the one is moral and should be, the other immoral and should not be.

The contradictions immanent in the Categorical Imperative have now been developed; and it will perhaps be admitted that they constitute a sufficient refutation of any merely formal principle of morality. If this be granted, it follows that an ethical system can be constructed only on a foundation which is not formal, that is, only on the basis of a law which has a material content. But Kant, in a proposition as closely reasoned as any of its prototypes in Geometry, claims to have demonstrated that "all material practical principles are, as such, of one and the same kind, and belong to a general system of self-love or individual happiness." * Now, if there is any fact of which our moral consciousness is indubitably certain, it is that duty does not consist in the pursuit of individual happiness, and it is on this account that egoistic hedonism fails as a philosophy of ethics. If, then, all material principles are of this nature, as the proposition asserts, then obviously they afford no explanation of the facts of our moral life; and, since the same has been shown of all formal principles, it would follow that an ethical philosophy was for ever impossible. But before assenting to this conclusion, the proof must be examined by which Kant professes to have established the premise on which it rests. What is valid, what not valid, in his demonstration of the egoism of all material principles?

First of all it must be granted, with Kant, that the pleasure arising from the idea of the existence of an

* *Werke*, v. 22.

object rests on the receptivity of the subject, and belongs therefore to sense and not to understanding. It must further be granted that this expected pleasure determines the desire towards the realization of the object. Nor can it be denied that a principle which makes such pleasure the highest determinator of the will is one of self-love. But it cannot be granted that *all* material principles are of this nature. And we must, therefore, affirm that Kant has not proved what he set out to prove. Indeed, this becomes obvious by a mere comparison of the enunciation and the conclusion of the proposition. The proof only warrants what the conclusion expresses, namely, that "all material principles, *which put the determinator of choice in pleasure or pain, resulting from the existence of an object,* are, *so far,* all of the same kind, that they belong to a system of self-love or individual happiness." But the enunciation affirms that *all* material principles *as such* belong to a system of self-love. And between this universal and that particular judgment there lies an area which, it requires little logic to teach us, is wholly untouched by the demonstration. If only the class of material principles specified is egoistic, it does not follow that the same can be predicated of *all* material principles *as such.*

The result, accordingly, is that morality, which we have found inexplicable from the mere form of a universal law, is not incompatible with a principle that differs from the formal law, in that it has a content, but agrees with it, in that it is of universal extension. Such a principle cannot be the product of reason alone, which is only form-giving, nor yet of sense alone, which is only the source of matter. It is to be a principle for men, and differs therefore on the one hand from a law for merely

rational beings like the angels, as on the other, from a maxim for merely sensuous beings like the brutes. It must express the end for us as men, *τἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν*. It can be found only in the characteristics of human nature—in the idea of man as such. Any other derivation of it misses the mark, either by aiming too high or not high enough. We believe that the conception of Aristotle must form the starting-point of any scientific ethic, though, as may hereafter appear, Aristotle did not apprehend, as Kant did, the significance of an *à priori* element in morality. But a rightly-developed Aristotelianism in ethics must mediate between Formalism and Empiricism, just as Criticism, in the theoretical sphere, brought together the truth of Sensationalism and Rationalism.

Against such a derivation of morality from the essential nature of man, no one has, however, protested more vigorously than Kant himself. "It is," he says (to quote only one of scores of passages), "of the last moment to be on our guard against supposing for an instant that the reality of this principle can be deduced from the peculiar character of human nature. For duty is to be the unconditionate necessity of an action, and must accordingly be valid for all rational beings (to whom an Imperative is at all applicable) and *only on this account* binding on the human will. Whatever is derived, on the contrary, from the particular constitution of human nature, from certain feelings or tendencies, or even if possible from a special bias peculiar to human reason but not necessary for the will of every rational being, may, it is true, be a maxim for us, but never a universal law, may, that is, be a subjective principle we like to follow, but can never be an objective law, ordaining how to act,

even though the bent, inclination, and constitution of our nature were opposed to it. Indeed, the sublimity and internal dignity of the law show themselves the more conspicuously, according as the subjective motives are in opposition to it, without however weakening its determinative force or derogating from its validity."* In this passage Kant very emphatically rejects the deduction of the ethical principle from the peculiar nature of man. He will have it binding on man, *solely because* it is valid for all rational beings. But since we know of no other rational beings than man, it does seem a work of supererogation to excogitate for them a system of morality, and a hopeless undertaking to reach in this way the definite rights and duties incident to human life. If the law, which it is Kant's merit to have shown must be universal, be yet elevated above the universal of human nature, so as to include within itself every rational being, then by leaving the actual world we know for an imaginary world of which we know nothing, we make it incapable of sustaining any content, without which, however, we have found morality wholly inexplicable.

Why, then, did Kant here aim so high—Kant, who had formerly meted out the domains and bounds of knowledge and cautioned us against those stormy and perilous seas of the Unknowable, which encompass on every side the tiny island of our knowable world? He sought, in fact, to rid his morality of the empirical element, which could not be avoided if the idea of humanity were taken as its foundation. For Kant the empirical was always associated with the idea of the accidental; and he felt that its admission into morality would sully the purity of the good will and endanger the dignity of a law that was

* *Werke*, iv. 273.

to be valid even though opposed by the appetites, the tendencies, or even by the constitution of our nature. But Kant here fails to distinguish what is essentially different. His grounds are valid against a system that makes pleasure the end and aim of action, but they do not touch a principle like that of Aristotle, which lays a foundation for morality in the essential and permanently-abiding nature of man. It makes all the difference in the world whether the principle be *ἡδονή* or *εὐδαιμονία*, but it is just this that Kant failed to see. Versed as he was in the moral speculations of the French and English, it is more than probable that he knew only at second-hand the great masterpieces of antiquity; and so failed to profit by a distinction which Aristotle had so clearly developed.

The ancient moralist, recognizing that the good after which all strive was universally named *εὐδαιμονιά*, proceeds to notice the variety of meaning covered by that term, and rejects *ἡδονή* as an equivalent for it. The absolute good must be in itself sufficient and cannot, like pleasure, be dependent on anything else. What this self-sufficient good, which is desired only for its own sake, may be, will appear from a consideration of the work peculiar to man (*τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἔργον, τὸ ἴδιον, τὸ οἰκεῖον*). For as the flute-player and the sculptor and the artist find the good and the perfect in their respective works, so must the absolute good be found in the peculiar work of man, if such indeed there be. That, however, cannot be doubted; for nature that has assigned special functions to the flute-player and the sculptor would not have left man, as such, without an end. It is incredible that eye and hand and foot, and in general every member, have manifestly each a function of their own, but man as a totality, man apart from these individual members has

none. Granting, then, that man must have some work or activity peculiar to him as man, we must next determine its character. It cannot be merely to live, to nourish himself, and to grow, for that is common to him with the plants; nor yet to live a life of feeling, for that he shares with the animals. What distinguishes man from these is reason, and the end of his being must therefore consist in an activity of reason.

Is now the motive from which Kant forbids the deduction of morality from the peculiar nature of man justified by this view of the typical system of Aristotle? Does it endanger either the purity of the will or the unconditionality of the law? The answer of course depends upon what we mean by our terms. If the will is good and the law is absolute only because they are both empty abstractions, then assuredly they are robbed of their dignity in a system like that of Aristotle, which requires that each should have a definite content. But a dignity that consists in barren formality and that cannot come in contact with reality without losing its essential character, it is at once absurd and impossible to maintain in a philosophy of our concrete morality. It is not necessary to repeat our criticism of the practical philosophy; it will suffice to recall that the one great truth we found in its principles was that the moral law and the good will are possible only by merging the particularity of sense in the universality of reason. But for this, which was excluded by the system of Kant, ample provision is made in the system of Aristotle. It provides for the law a form that is universal, and a matter that is concrete. The character of generality cannot be wanting to a principle which formulates, not the empirical and accidental nature of the individual, but

the inner necessary and unconditioned idea of the species itself. Nor yet can it lack a content, for it is not an abstract universal of reason, but the concrete universal of humanity. And the union of form and matter in actual living practice is guaranteed by an Imperative ordaining that reason, by which alone man is made what he is, shall permeate all the activity of his life and gain the mastery over his blindly self-seeking appetites and desires. In this way the individual while concretely realizing the idea of his own being follows laws that are unconditioned, because given in the idea, and that are universal, because the idea is not peculiar to him, but valid for every human being. The principle of Aristotle accordingly satisfies the requirements of the moral law as explicated by Kant.

The same may be said of the good will, which is however not explicitly discussed by Aristotle. With the correlate question of freedom and necessity it came first with Christianity into the living consciousness of modern Europe. But it is not only in harmony with, it is really supplementary to, a principle that places the absolute good in the realization of the essential nature of man. The good will is, as Kant explains, one that wills the universal; and since, as we have seen, the universal cannot be abstract, the good will can be no other than that which wills the concrete universal. When man no longer follows blindly his selfish appetites and desires, but acts rationally in accordance with the idea he has of his own worth and dignity as man, then the will is good, for it is in the unhampered service of reason.

Instead, therefore, of arguing with Kant that the moral law is not grounded in the peculiarity of human nature and is binding on man only because valid for all

rational beings, we must, in the spirit of Aristotelianism, maintain "that no other task can be given to man than the realization of the idea of his own worth, and that no other than this can be comprehended, no other recognized by him."* Had Kant really understood this principle, it may be doubted whether he would have cast it so lightly aside. But there is ample evidence that he had no right comprehension of it whatsoever. And his table of ethical principles, a table professedly exhaustive, does not even contain the name of Aristotle, for whose principle there is in fact no representative. It omits the name of the greatest of moralists and passes over in silence the only principle Kant had been at pains specifically to refute!

It may now be considered as established that the moral law, which Kant rightly argued must be unconditional, can be no other than a material principle whose form and content are given in the idea of man as man. Kant's opposition to this view, if it be not a mere misunderstanding, must be held ungrounded and untenable. We have now to add that Kant himself by a very instructive inconsequence more than once assumes the principle he had so vigorously combated. Thus when he speaks of "the idea of humanity man carries in his soul as archetype of his actions," he concedes everything for which we here contend.† And this agreement is no accidental occurrence, but a result rendered inevitable by the logic of the moral consciousness. Hence Kant is obliged to carry this conception into the development of the practical philosophy, though, it is true, with a sacrifice of its unity and consistency. Without supposing

* Trendelenburg's *Naturrecht*, p. 41 (2nd ed. 1861).

† iii. 260.

that the last grounds of morality were contained in the idea of man as such, he could never have reached the second formula for the Categorical Imperative, the formula ordaining: so to act as to use the humanity in thine own person and in the person of every other always as an end, never merely as a means.* And only on the same assumption is it possible to classify duties as tending to the perfection of self or to the happiness of others. †

Had Kant only meditated on the principle here unconsciously and illogically assumed he would have found in it the key to the solution of that unnatural antinomy between goodness and happiness, which was not to be avoided on his own conception of morality. True to the noble thought with which his ethical writings begin, that a good will is the only absolute good, he rightly refuses to identify the moral with the pleasurable, and, as a consequence, regards the pleasurable as an impure motive to the good will. The children of the kingdom take not the hireling's wages, nor give the hireling's service. Duty is the necessity of an act out of reverence for the law. On this side there is no compromise between virtue and happiness. But on another, the case is different. For, as we have already seen, in the highest good, which the moral law enjoins us to realize, happiness is an element not less than virtue. And, as is well known, the antinomy supplies grounds for postulating the existence of God.

Without inquiring into the nature of the new eudaemonistic God that Kant thus sets up on the ruins of Deism, we may merely observe that He has no other function than the mediation of a contradiction which is due solely to the one-sidedness of Kant's ethical philo-

* *Werke*, iv. 277. † vii. 189.

sophy. If the moral principle had admitted pleasure, not as motive to, but as accompaniment of, moral volition and action, there would have been no need of a supernatural mechanism for the adjustment of happiness to virtue. But in Kant's eyes the least inclination to good seemed to detract from the worth of goodness, which, as he conceived, only the moral law could produce. And so sharply does he exclude inclination from morality, that he defines, in his last ethical work, duty as "necessitation to an end which is unwillingly adopted."* Thus Schiller could say that the Draco of his age expounded the idea of duty with a rigour that frightened away every charm. But, as Schiller rightly maintained, duty cannot be for ever opposed by inclination. The good will must become at last an abiding disposition which has its delight only in the good. The ideal of a moral man is a unity in which the "law of the mind" has taken up into itself "the other law that wars against it," and enlisted its energy in the service of the good. But Kant regarded as end what was only beginning, and placed, accordingly, duty in an eternal warfare between "flesh" and "spirit." Starting from a law valid for rational beings alone, he was obliged, when he reached the specifically human nature, to suppress entirely the claims of sense. But the enemy is not completely conquered until reconciled; and Kant's mistake consists in attempting to quench the fire of sense instead of turning it to account for the quickening of the moral life and the glow of moral feeling. Had he taken for his principle, instead of that formal universal of reason, the idea of human nature as such, he would have seen that morality, consisting as it does in the realization of the end to which we are destined, must necessarily

* *Werke*, vii. 189.

be accompanied by pleasure in the attainment of that end. The idea is the essential and the original, the pleasure the accidental and the secondary. The ends in which the idea of humanity expresses itself must be the only motives of the good will; but when these are honestly fulfilled, then pleasure springs up at once as consequence and as sign of the moral development. "An ethical philosophy which would exclude pleasure would be contrary to nature; and one which would make a principle of it would be contrary to spirit."* The doctrine of Epicurus and the doctrine of the Stoics are both false. Virtue does not consist in the pursuit of pleasure, nor yet in the pursuit of some imaginary sublimity that excludes it. The truth of both, and the truth of ethics at the same time, is contained potentially at least in the system of Aristotle.

There is still another point to which reference may be made for the sake of comparison between the two principles. It has been seen already that the Categorical Imperative is formal and empty, but we must now add that it is essentially subjective. The individual is supposed to be the source and the standard of all moral good, and no account is taken of the morality already existent in the world. But this wholly ignores the development of the individual consciousness, which is made up for the most part of the moral and intellectual substance it has assimilated from its environment. *Unus homo, nullus homo.* The individual has not to create from his own innate emptiness some new morality; in the main, he has only to make his own the morality of his people and his country. And his moral notions are accordingly conditioned by the history and circumstances of the

* Trendelenburg's *Historische Beiträge*, iii. 212 (ed. 1867).

people among whom he is born, by the national religion which he early imbibes, and by the accumulated experience of every kind of which he becomes a participator. In this spiritual atmosphere the individual is moralized. When the conscience within responds to the conscience without, his education is finished; and then, if ever, but assuredly not till then, may creation take the place of assimilation. But Kant's principle assumes that the moral man is never assimilative, but always creative or self-originating. The formal universal is an idea of his brain, not the objectively realized universal of State, of Church, of Family, and of Society. And as Kant's practical philosophy ignores the derivation of the individual consciousness from the objective consciousness as mirrored in these institutions, so it neglects, and could not help neglecting, these factors themselves. When, however, it is seen what a *rôle* they play in the development of morality, a philosophy of them will be inevitably demanded. They are, to use Schleiermacher's phrase, our ethical heritage (*ethische Güter*); and, as such, their origin must be traced and their rights justified. Into this question we cannot of course now enter. We have only to note that it is a defect of the Kantian philosophy to have ignored or even to have excluded it. An implicit explanation, on the other hand, is latent in the principle of Aristotle. For the absolute good, which he finds in the peculiar work of man, is to be sufficient in itself not only for the individual but also for the human species; and since the inner side of it consists in the activity of reason,—in the realization of the "proper self," the outer side must be an objectivation in which humanity as a whole will find itself realized; and this, since man is a *Ζῶον πολιτικόν*, can be no other than the

civil community or the State. In other language, our social institutions are the objective expression of the idea of humanity as it embodies itself in the course of history.

The view of the moral principle for which we have been contending rests on a metaphysical assumption that must now be indicated. If the account given be correct, duty consists in the realization of an end or idea, for the sake of which alone man exists as moral agent. Here we are in accord with Kant, who conceived the perfecting of the will through reason as the final cause of our existence. Ethics is inevitably driven to a teleological conception of the universe. We find morality explicable only if thought be assumed as *prius*, and force or matter as the subordinate condition for the fulfilment of the ends which thought establishes. This organic conception of the world we are not now called upon metaphysically to justify. We have only to observe that it is forced upon us by the interpretation of the facts of the moral consciousness. By implication, therefore, we have already rejected an ethical philosophy built on a system of metaphysics directly opposed to the teleological. Where matter is taken as the primary and original, and thought as the secondary and derivative, there emerges such a system,—which may, by way of contrast, be called the mechanical. A science of physics is possible, but a science of ethics is impossible under this conception of the universe. If man is nothing but a congeries of feelings and ideas, which a blindly working nature has set up, without purpose and without aim, if his actions are the necessary consequences of feelings which are neither caused by him nor subject to his control, does it not seem evident that moral responsibility is meaningless

and duty a vain mocking word? If we are merely the arena in which events happen, and not the self-centred personalities from whom actions take their source, then morality consists in a simple *laissez-faire*, and ethics is not distinguishable from physics.

4. *Evolutionistic Hedonism.*

But though our final result is that the mechanical conception of the universe cannot be reconciled with the deliverances of the moral consciousness, it is notorious that evolution, as thus interpreted, has been applied—and, as is widely supposed, with success—to the problems of moral philosophy. Of this philosophizing Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics* may be taken as a typical example. And it now remains to examine the philosophy of ethics which that work contains.*

Mr. Spencer makes no reference to the will in his work

* It may be well to note that with Darwinism as a biological hypothesis we have in this essay really no concern. Certain metaphysical assumptions often associated with it we are however forced to reject. There are two spheres—the sphere of nature and the sphere of spirit. And if Darwinism has shed light on that it has left this as it found it. Lange—no biassed authority—says: "The evolution of man from lower forms of life is from the point of view of natural science perfectly self-evident; while, on the contrary, his conscious life (*Geistesleben*) remains still a problem when all the consequences of Darwinism have been granted" (*Geschichte des Materialismus*, ii. 313 (3rd ed.)). It is our effort to show what this conscious life, on its moral side, really implies. And we enter our humble protest against the illogical method of importing into the sphere of morality a hypothesis taken from other phenomena. We demand that the facts of morality shall be studied, as Darwin studied the facts of life, and *then*, but not till then, a theory of them given—a theory deduced from the facts or framed with reference to them, and not with reference to a wholly different class of facts.

on ethics, but elsewhere he rejects the conception of freedom as an illusion. Not that he proves it such, not that he examines its validity at all; but, simply setting out with the assumption, he shows how the "illusion" has been generated. It arose, he informs us, from the belief "that at each moment the *ego* present as such in consciousness (I exclude the implied, but unknown substratum which can never be present) is something more than the aggregate of feelings and ideas which then exists."* But the fact is, it seems, that the *ego* is nothing else than this "aggregate," and in no other sense can it be said that "I" determine this or that action or volition. As the influence of Hume is traceable in Mr. Spencer's Lockean theory of knowledge, here it meets us at the very threshold of the ethics. But the hypothesis is not on that account any the less mysterious. Why should all mankind have fallen into this strange error of supposing themselves something more than their "feelings and ideas"? This supposition, so marvellous in itself, needs some justification before being used as an axiom to account for real or imaginary illusions. And the next stage is equally wonderful. For even though we concede that men, under a strange infatuation, have come to believe in a "mental self" present to consciousness, apart from the aggregate of ideas and emotions, how can there arise from this the notion of freedom? Because, says Mr. Spencer, we attribute the action to it and not to the causality of a feeling or idea. But why we should do this, there is no reason given; and none perhaps could be given except the exigencies of a foregone conclusion. Without a previous belief that we were free, there would be no ground for assigning the

* *Psychology*, i. 509.

volition to the causality of the *ego* and not of the feeling that preceded it. Indeed, were inference at all possible for such a consciousness—and that cannot be admitted—would it not argue from the connexion between feelings and actions that the will was necessitated? Even, then, though we grant the absurd supposition of that ghostly presence in consciousness—that *ego* apart from ideas and emotions—we must deny that it could throw such a deceptive halo about the mysteries of the human will. But how *it* ever got its seat there in consciousness; how we, who are merely bundles of conscious states, could appear to the "aggregates" that we are more than "aggregates," is a mystery without parallel, or paralleled only by the belief in freedom which this bastard *ego* imposes upon our credulity.

The genesis of the notion of freedom here given, is, we think, absurd; but the fact remains that for Mr. Spencer the notion is an illusion. And holding with Kant that freedom is the *ratio essendi* of morality, it is not easy for us to see how ethics is possible on the denial of it. Mr. Spencer was, perhaps, dimly conscious of the same difficulty; for it is only by changing the problem of ethics that his system is at all conceivable. With a *naïveté* that is really surprising, he says in his well-known letter to Mr. Mill: "The view for which I contend is, that morality properly so-called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of Moral Science to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action

necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness."*

That the science thus sketched in outline would, when realized, be useful, there can be no doubt whatever. And any one who has in the slightest degree observed how much needless suffering is entailed, through ignorance of the conditions under which we live, would welcome a hygienic almanac in which human actions were tabulated according to their "beneficial" or "detrimental" results, specific effects being set over against specific causes with explanation of their necessary connexions. The possibility of such a science may be doubted; and the inductions it would bring together from almost all the other sciences, especially from Biology, Psychology, and Sociology, certainly imply an almost superhuman effort and grasp to adapt them to the infinite variety of human activities. In outline, however, the science is at least conceivable. But though its possibility be granted, and the benefits to be derived from it be emphasized, we must note that it would be the science of *hedonistic action* not of *right conduct*. It would have shown the causes and the conditions of pleasure, but it would not have touched the question of goodness. From the tables it could in any case be seen what it was prudent to do, but in no case what it was duty to do. To identify moral action with beneficial results, is to obliterate distinctions that are as important as they are manifestly obvious. If any one asserted that the science of *sound* properly so-called had for its object to determine how and why certain relations existed among the phenomena of *colour*, it might be difficult to refute him, although you were certain he used words in a meaning entirely foreign to

* *Data of Ethics*, p. 57.

the popular usage. The case is precisely the same with Mr. Spencer. He asserts that ethics or the science of right conduct aims at determining how and why actions are beneficial or detrimental. But the voice of humanity, as caught alike in language and in thought, has proclaimed the incommensurability of right with the beneficial and of wrong with the detrimental. It is sure that pleasure is not morality nor misery immorality; and that the moral life does not consist in the pursuit of the one or the avoidance of the other. A "moral science" that proposes to deduce the laws and conditions of happiness is as much opposed to the facts of the moral consciousness as an acoustics of colours to the facts of external perception. A "moral science" must be a philosophy of our morality, not of our pleasures or our advantages, or anything else that is gratuitously identified with our morality.

This false equation between the good and the beneficial has led Mr. Spencer to assign to the law of causality an important place in his evolutionistic theory of ethics. He blames moral philosophers for not erecting "into a method the ascertaining of necessary relations between causes and effects, and deducing rules of conduct from formulated statements of them."* And in "studying the various ethical theories," he has been "struck with the fact that they are all characterized either by entire absence of the idea of causation or by inadequate presence of it."† And the fact is not essentially different from Mr. Spencer's representation. Moralists have never attempted to show the causal connexion between specific modes of action and the feelings of pleasure or pain accompanying them, much less to construct on such a

* *Data of Ethics*, p. 61. † *Ibid.* p. 49.

foundation a system of rules valid for all human conduct. Already in possession of a moral estate, bequeathed by the spirit of past generations, they did not foolishly attempt to create it *de novo* by their own individual efforts. They found existing in the world a system of morality, which had formed the fibre of their spiritual being before as yet they had awakened to reflection and become "ethical philosophers." And this universal ethos, at whose breasts they had been suckled, naturally seemed better than any poor empty phantom of their own individual brain. It never occurred to them that the world had waited for "rules of conduct" till they appeared, like gift-bringing Gods from Heaven, to supply the universal want. Nor did they deem it any part of their task to construct from their own private minds a set of laws to which humanity must conform. Recognizing the superior wisdom of universal reason, as it exists not merely ideally in the moral notions of individuals, but actually in the objective realization of these into State and Society and Family, they proposed to themselves no other problem than the understanding of what actually exists —the comprehension of the *diesseits*, not the creation of an imaginary *jenseits*. And the solution of this problem took them far beyond the "idea of causation," which, if not entirely absent from their systems, is introduced only to be excluded on the ground that morality is impossible, if spirit be in any way subject to the categories, which spirit itself has imposed upon nature.

The ethics of evolution, however, has hitherto universally, though, as we venture to think, not necessarily, followed a wholly different method. And it is this which Mr. Spencer adopts. Instead of setting out from the totality of facts to be explained, he begins with an

assumption borrowed from elsewhere, gratuitously importing into the realm of thought a category, which we know only as valid for nature. The law of causality which the knowing subject finds, because he has put, in the objective world, is, without any grounds except the needs of a mechanical hypothesis of the universe, proclaimed a law for self-consciousness itself. If the facts cannot be explained on this dogmatic assumption, so much the worse for the facts. The hypothesis is not perhaps consonant with "morality as it is," but it is the source of "morality as it should be!" Without apparently observing the infinite presumption implied in the impugning by any one man of the morality of humanity, or the ludicrousness of a "philosopher" creating from his own individual prejudices and prepossessions a "morality as it should be," our Evolutionists dilate upon more than one "defect in the current system of morality," develop points hitherto hidden from "men at large and moralists as exponents of their view," and, as if possessed of an insight at once poetic and prophetic, celebrate the coming triumph of "Industrialism," when man, who "as at present constituted," is not in harmony with the requirements of the theory, shall have adapted himself "to the conditions of social life," or to the "guidance by proximate pleasures and pains," which all other animals have already accepted as Categorical Imperative in *their* "system of morality."* We ask for a philosophy of our existent morality, and we are presented with a dogmatic non-existent morality. This surely is to receive a stone,

* See *Data of Ethics*, pp. v., 70, 87, 132. "Hence there is a supposable formula for the activities of each species, which, could it be drawn out, would constitute a *system of morality* for that species" (p. 132).

when we have asked for bread. But that is not the worst. A philosophy of morality we may dispense with,—not, however, with morality itself. Yet the Evolutionist requires that it be suppressed when it conflicts with his "Moral Science," whose "deductions are to be recognized as laws of conduct, and are to be conformed to," irrespective of the dictates of duty or the unmistakable voice of conscience. The facts, it would seem, exist for the sake of the theory, not the theory for the explanation of the facts.

We have already advanced far enough to see that the Evolution-hypothesis does not really affect, because it never reaches, the problems of ethical philosophy. These lie in the moral consciousness of humanity, to which it simply gives the go-by. The conceptions of duty and responsibility may be taken as fundamental. Mankind, if we except a few philosophers, is certain that the *conditio sine quâ non* of the first is the freedom of the will, and of the second, the self-sameness or identity of the person. If these be denied, it can see neither meaning nor content in the moral conceptions. The Evolutionist, however, enters the ethical sphere with a ready-made theory framed, irrespective of morality, from a wholly different class of phenomena. His premises are that the self is merely a collection of disconnected ideas, feelings, and volitions, and that will is only the name for a determination towards action by any of these ideas, feelings, or emotions. An *ego* to which the "states of consciousness" belong, and by which they are held together, he regards as a fiction and an illusion. Not less illusory he proclaims that belief of the unphilosophical mind, which holds to a will that *wills* something, and not to the will of the "philosophers," which is only another name for

the "movement" produced by the "composition" of the "forces" called motives, as they act and re-act in the chaotic region called self. But, as we have just said, the denial of freedom and of personal identity, and the extension of causality to mind—which is only the other side of that denial—lead inevitably to the annihilation of all morality. The problem of the ethical philosopher has therefore no existence for the Evolutionist, who has already excluded it by the one-sidedness of his mechanical hypothesis. But he proposes a new problem to himself. Emptying morality of its content and identifying the good with the pleasurable, he sets out "to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness." And these he enjoins upon men as laws of their conduct. Here, however, he falls into an inconsequence. For if man is necessitated like any material object, as the theory asserts, then you cannot enjoin anything upon him any more than you can command the sun to stand still, or the stars to change their courses. And though such a "Moral Science" may interest the theorist, it is of no use for practice, just because there would be no practice, when the life of man was reduced to a series of events causally happening within the arena he has somehow mistaken for a personal self. If on the other hand man is not necessitated, as the theory has assumed, then it is evident that the "laws of his conduct" will be very different from those deduced from a hypothesis borrowed from the mechanical world. In any case, therefore, the "moral" speculations of the Evolutionist can have no interest for us as Moralists.

If a consideration of the scope of the ethics of evolution

end in doubts as to the worth of such a science, an examination of its subject-matter will only confirm them. It has to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce *happiness*, and what kinds to produce *unhappiness*. It is at the outset assumed, in connexion with a hypothesis framed to fit a wholly different class of phenomena, that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pains are the ultimate aims of all human conduct. Thus the inquiry into morality begins with the assertion that morality is not an end in itself, but merely a means to something else. "The ultimate moral aim" is "a desirable state of feeling" (p. 46). You are to be virtuous, either that you yourself or that others may be happy. The ethics of evolution, though certain that "the good is universally the pleasurable" (p. 30), wavers as to whether it is the pleasurable for you or the pleasurable for Society. The incongruities that emerge from its fusion of egoistic and universalistic Hedonism will meet us later. Meantime we wish to dwell on the first assumption that pleasure is the end, "pleasure somewhere, at some time, to some being" (p. 46). Meeting one assertion with another, why shall we not maintain that morality is an end in itself? This can be impugned only on the supposition that there is no absolute end, or, if there be, that it is not morality. The ethics of evolution rests on the latter assumption. It asserts that morality is only a means to an ulterior end, which is pleasure. But nothing could be more gratuitous than this dogmatic assumption with which Mr. Spencer begins. As he denies that morality is an end in itself, so is it open to anyone else to deny that pleasure is an end in itself. For the question,

Why should I be happy? is just as little, or just as much justifiable as the question, Why must I be moral? The end can never be reached by simply asking Why. And it is no argument in favour of Hedonism that it gives a reason for virtue, so long as it gives no reason for that reason. Granted that you are to be moral that you may be happy, why then are you to be happy? And the same may be asked of each and every end. If therefore we are to have a philosophy of our morality at all, it can only be by facing the facts of the moral world and observing with what end alone they are compatible or possible.

That pleasure is the ultimate end Empiricism has generally taken for granted. Evolution, however, adduces a reason for it. It maintains that pleasure is the condition under which life has developed and the condition under which alone it can continue. If pleasure be not the end of conduct, then life would disappear. But just because you have given a reason for pleasure as end, it is not an ultimate end. You are moral that you may be happy, for without pleasure you could not live. Life is, therefore, taken as the ulterior end—that for which you are at once moral and happy. But the old spectre again starts up in the question, Why shall I live? And if, as we venture to think, no other answer can be given than that of Kant, which asserts that morality alone is that which makes life worth living, then with all our questionings we have merely described a circle and returned to the starting-point, that we are moral because morality itself is the end. Or if so much be not granted, it must at least be conceded that pleasure has no more claim to be the ultimate end than virtue itself.

But if *de jure* it cannot be shown that pleasure is the ulterior end and virtue only a means to it, there are *de facto* grounds for inverting that relation. For whatever be the opinion of the speculator as to what, according to his theory, should be means, and what ends, the moral consciousness, whence alone the data of ethics can be taken, is indubitably certain that virtue must be an end in itself, and never a mere means to anything else. It is sure that the moral man, neither directly nor indirectly, aims at wages or perquisites in the performance of his duties. And it suspects of immorality the man who practises virtue only as a convenient way of attaining something beyond it. All this is too well known to call for further illustration. And yet, universally recognized as it is by the consciousness of mankind, it is habitually ignored by our Evolutionists. Their Ethics, as we have seen, sets out from a hypothesis which is the direct contrary of it—from the assumption that pleasure is the only good and virtue merely a means to its attainment. Thus, instead of explaining the phenomena of the moral world, the ethics of evolution passes them over, or, at best, explains them away. The facts, however, abide; and none is more certain than the fact that pleasure can never be the end of moral volition and action.

Besides these objections to the fundamental assumption of the ethics of evolution—objections which we venture to call insuperable—there is another which leaves that science without any *raison d'être* whatever. To put this position beyond doubt will occupy us in the remainder of this essay. Meantime the essence of the matter may be stated in a few words. The subject-matter of "moral science" is the content of the moral world. This consists, on its inner side, of certain conceptions, emotions,

and beliefs; on the outer, of a realization of these in the State, the Family, and Society. Ethics has to explain these moral phenomena, just as astronomy has to explain the phenomena of the heavens. A science which fails to do that, whatever else it may be, is no "*moral* science," and has from the point of view of morality no justification whatsoever. Now it is precisely this we maintain, this we hope to demonstrate, of the ethics of evolution.

For that purpose we might proceed at once to an examination of the relative parts of Mr. Spencer's *Data of Ethics*, which may be considered the classical, as it is the latest, exposition of "moral science" from the standpoint of mechanical evolution. But before doing so, we shall attempt to establish our position by a few general considerations of a more abstract character.

Our thesis is that the ethics of evolution can give no explanation of the facts of morality. The moral law, as Kant correctly interpreting the moral consciousness affirms, is universal and necessary. It prescribes something to be done, not by any particular individual, but by all human beings, and not under certain conditions, but absolutely or unconditionally. The popular consciousness is clear on both these points; and even Mr. Spencer may here be in harmony with it, for he ordains that the laws to be deduced by his "moral science" shall be observed by all men, irrespective of their own personal desires and estimates. But how now are these characteristics to be explained from the principle of Hedonism? If the moral worth of actions be estimated by the feelings of pleasure and pain which accompany them, then it is obvious that the standard of morality cannot be objective and universally valid. For the agreeable and the disagreeable depend upon the relation

of the object to the subject and manifestly vary with different persons and even with the same person at different times. Now, according to the theory, it must follow that A, who finds his pleasure in excessive sensual gratification, or in violating the rights of others, is equally moral with B, who pursues a conduct the direct contrary of this. Or how are you to prove to the former that his life is immoral, when by hypothesis pleasure is the only standard of what is right, and pleasure can be estimated only by each individual for himself? Thus Hedonism knows nothing of the notion of duty —of a something that is obligatory upon me whether I like it or not, and upon all others equally under the same circumstances. But this is one of the most prominent factors in the moral consciousness, which an ethical philosophy is bound to explain.

It is not, however, necessary that momentary pleasure be taken as the end; and the theory next aims at freeing itself from its palpable defects by placing the end in the greatest possible happiness of the individual during the entire period of his life. It assumes that from the experience of the race a series of rules might be collected to show what activities were conducive to the highest and most enduring pleasures, and what brought the greatest quantum of enjoyment with the least alloy of pain. This is the "Nautical Almanack" of Mill's *Utilitarianism*, which Mr. Spencer endeavours to supersede by substituting for its empirical inductions a system of rational deductions from the laws of life and the conditions of existence. The Almanack is certainly open to the gravest objections. The rules of experience are at best only the expression of an average and probable calculation, and the individual

can never be sure they have an application to his particular case. Even were that found to be so, they may be in conflict with the maturest judgments he himself has formed on the line of conduct to be pursued; and since his pleasure is the end, he must, it might be supposed, be left free to follow the means he deems best. And this brings us to an objection which neither the Hedonism of Mr. Mill nor that of Mr. Spencer is able to overcome. Popular morality is aware of an obligation on the part of the agent to submit himself to laws, which it conceives as binding upon him. But what binding force have the rules of experience, what the deductions of the ethics of evolution? I may follow them or I may not. The end is pleasure, and with that end no rules, no deductions are necessarily given. They come to it from without; and, as their connection is external and artificial, it may be recognized or it may be ignored. Even though the rules are the surest way to the greatest sum-total of happiness, you can only call the individual who declines to follow them a fool, but you cannot compel or oblige him to act against his own views and wishes. What shall he care for the "groans of an abstraction?"

Hedonism endeavours to escape this objection, by placing the end, no longer in the happiness of the individual, but in the well-being of the community or even of the "entire sentient creation." It defines good as that which tends to promote the happiness of all sentient beings, bad as that which is detrimental to their welfare. And in the relation between the individual and society, it thinks it has found a basis for the notions of duty, responsibility, and accountability. This is, however, an illusion. If pleasure is the only good,

neither the origin nor the validity of the moral notions admits of explanation. Not their *origin:* for though the end assumed is nominally a universal, it is incapable, because it is sensuous and not rational, of ever being in practice more than a particular. Grant that pleasure is the *summum bonum,* and it follows, not that the individual will seek to promote it in others, but only that he will pursue it for himself. And that he should ever have passed from the particularity inherent in the principle to the universality which it is framed to explain, is only then conceivable, if at the dawn of self-consciousness he possess, not merely a sensuous but also a rational nature, which makes it possible for him to compare himself with others and to give himself universal laws of conduct, and in which is already contained *à priori* the form of duty or moral obligation that furnishes at once the groundwork and the possibility of all personal morality. Utilitarianism, however, will not accept this position. It perseveres in the attempt to derive the universal from the particular, as though by a natural dialectic selfishness inevitably passed over into morality. Men, it is argued, soon perceive that their stock of pleasures is likely in the end to be increased if they abstain from those acts which excite the enmity and opposition of their fellow-men. And to a certain extent this is no doubt true. But even such a fact cannot explain the genesis of the *moral* character of the notions under consideration. On the contrary, it is inconsistent with the unconditionedness of all moral precepts, and its logical outcome is, not a system of morality, but a series of pliable rules of prudence and of cunning. And this brings us to the second point, which regards the *validity* of the moral conceptions.

Were they grounded only on prudential considerations, one would be free to do evil provided no bad consequences were to be feared. If I am to aim at the universal good only as a means of reaching my own individual pleasure, then there is no reason why I should not, *e.g.* violate the rights of others, provided I were cunning enough to avoid, or powerful enough to avert, the consequences which such an act would bring upon me. This conclusion can be invalidated only by the assertion of a harmony, whether accidental or pre-established, between the pleasures of each and the pleasures of all. What is disagreeable to a community is disagreeable to the individuals who compose it; and similarly of the agreeable. And this argument has found favour with some who have been at pains to refute in Political Economy the fallacy of protection. Yet it is essentially the same logic in both cases. It is detrimental to the State *as a whole* to protect any industry for which its resources have no adaptation; but the class protected may prosper, and that just because the State is the loser. So in the moral sphere, it may also happen, that what is detrimental to society as a whole brings the greatest advantage to some particular individual. New grounds must, therefore, be sought for his obligation to sacrifice himself to the community. And these are, last of all, found in the force exercised by the State and by the social institutions and conventions. The ultimate ground of morality is the fear of punishment. But such a bald statement makes very apparent the insufficiency of the theory. For though it may explain *subjection*, it can give no account of *moral obligation*. Its consequences are the suppression of all that is most characteristic in the phenomena of the moral consciousness; and, in

practice, disregard for rights and duties, so long as they may be neglected without present or future disadvantage. Besides, if, as the wisest philosophers assure us, the State and Society are themselves only morality on the objection side, then the hypothesis, besides its other defects, is chargeable with explaining a notion by itself—with deriving morality from that whose sole content is morality.

Thus all forms of Hedonism seem worthless as theories of morality. Has then the hedonistic ethics of evolution escaped this destiny? Or, is it, as Mr. Spencer supposes, a rational philosophy of the moral world? To answer these questions is the only problem that remains.

Evolutionists, as already pointed out, enter the moral sphere with a ready-made conception of the universe, framed for the explanation of physical, or at most of biological phenomena. If the entire visible universe has been evolved under a process of necessary causation, mind and conscience, it is assumed, must also be subject to the same laws and governed by the same necessities. Hence the great ethical problem is to trace the genesis of our moral notions. If they are the accidental products of a blindly-moving fate, called the "Unknown and Unknowable," the Evolutionist has only to examine into their origin without in any way testing their validity. And the general result of the ethics of evolution is that "experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct."* This surely

* *Data of Ethics*, p. 123.

is a wonderful attempt at graphic illustration. You see, as it were, with the eye of fancy, utilities adhering to the nervous system, gathering themselves about it as about a central germ, till they undergo ultimately a new birth and look out upon you as faculties of moral intuition! But in the light of reason this whole process reveals itself as illusory. The experiences of utility can only mean experiences of pleasure, and these can neither be organized nor consolidated. A pleasurable feeling has only a transient existence: it is, it is not. It is perishable, and in the moment of being ceases to be. If experience of pleasures can in any way affect the nervous system, it is only by producing changes in its structure, as the reaction of function on organism. There is no "consolidated and organized" bundle of utilities which is handed from one generation to another, till it turns up at last as a system of morality. At most there is but a momentary nervous modification accompanying each experience of pleasure. These modifications may be repeated, but they cannot, properly speaking, be accumulated or transmitted. The nervous system, however, may be transmitted, and along with it the effects which have been registered on it by the experiences of pleasurable feeling. And this is no hypercritical distinction. For Mr. Spencer's language implies that there is something else transmitted than a nervous system, something which is "accumulated" into a faculty of "moral intuition." But though the pleasures experienced have produced never so many nervous modifications, though these, or rather the nervous system to which they belong, have been transmitted through never so many generations, they remain at last simply modifications of a nervous system—nothing more. And to identify them with a

faculty of moral intuition is to leap at a bound from the outer world of matter to the inmost centre of self-conscious thought.

The transformation here sketched in outline, however, Mr. Spencer attempts to make clear by a four-fold view of ethics. The science, he says, has a physical, a biological, a psychological, and a sociological aspect. Is the metamorphosis as thus mediated conceivable? Or, passing from the *origin* to the *validity* of our moral notions, is the science thus established a satisfactory philosophy of our morality?

Making causality the foundation of his system, Mr. Spencer first of all finds a "basis for morality in the physical order" (p. 59). Suppose, he proceeds, by tying a main artery we stop most of the blood going to a limb, there follows waste exceeding the repair and, in the end, disablement. This, he assures us, is "part of the physical order," and results "apart from any divine command, or political enactment, or moral intuition." And that is so evident that we are only surprised it should have been thought to need specific mention. But the fact that has not been observed is that the moral judgment passed on the act is *not* based on the physical order. If the limb were tied by a surgeon for some beneficent end, then even though the present consequences—the *effects* of the act—are painful, we do not call the act wrong. Contrariwise, if a murderer has adopted this method of taking life he is condemned, not because death as effect followed tying the artery as cause, but because he has violated the supreme imperative of morality—the law of reverence for mankind. Whenever a moral judgment is passed on an act, it will be found to have its grounds elsewhere than in the causal

connexion of the events to which it refers. Mr. Spencer, however, has another illustration of his thesis. The death consequent on a "cancer of the œsophagus" that prevents swallowing, is as "independent of any theological or political authority" as that caused by a want of food brought about by the robbery or the fraud of others. But this merely amounts to saying that, if a man does not take food, he will certainly die, whether starvation be due to a "cancer of the œsophagus" that prevents swallowing, or to an unmerited poverty that can supply nothing to swallow. So far both cases are alike; but so far also there is no ethical judgment, and therefore no possibility of a "basis for morality in the physical order." When the moral sphere is entered the analogy ceases. In the first case no one is blamed, in the second we condemn the robbers who brought poverty and death on their victim. And were their action as necessary a product of nature as the cancer of the œsophagus, why do we hold them responsible for the effects they have wrought and yet leave the cancer uncensured? We contend that on Mr. Spencer's theory of a "basis for morality in the physical order," the cancer deserves the same moral reprobation as the robbers! In other words, the theory by reducing human actions to the dead level of physical causation is utterly incapable of explaining the facts of the moral consciousness. Duty, responsibility, and remorse imply a freedom of the will, which is wholly unknown and unjustifiable in the physical order.

But Mr. Spencer does not in reality so much attempt to find a basis for morality in the physical system, as to discover analogies between the moral phenomena and the mechanical conceptions with which he approaches them. Be the foundation of morality what it may, he maintains

that since the process of evolution has been from an "indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity," moral actions must differ from the actions of the lower animals in general, and from immoral actions in particular, by these characteristics. "Moral principles," he elsewhere observes, "must conform to physical necessities" (p. 62.). And his affiliation of moral conduct with highly evolved conduct is unintelligible without this presupposition. The facts, however, do not bear out the requisites of the hypothesis. For it is obvious that many kinds of immoral conduct are characterized by definiteness and coherence, which Mr. Spencer predicates of moral conduct alone. The mechanical hypothesis of evolution may require that all immoral conduct should be indefinite and incoherent, but that is plainly not the case. The thief, acting on *his* principles, may lead just as coherent and definite a life as the hedonistic moralist. For example, Mr. Spencer says: "The conscientious man is exact in all his transactions. He supplies a precise weight for a specific sum; he gives a definite quality in fulfilment of understanding; he pays the full amount he bargained to do. In times as well as in quantities, his acts answer completely to anticipation, &c." Now all this may be asserted with equal propriety of certain classes of immoral men. Thus the burglar is exact in all his transactions; he supplies a precise key for a definite door; he gives a fixed share to his comrades according to agreement; he keeps his appointment to the day, to the minute; and as father—shall he not train his children to this definite and coherent mode of living? In short, the difference between morality and immorality lies much deeper than these superficial and accidental marks. Evil is not made good by becoming definite and coherent

nor is right made wrong by the mere *fiat* of a mechanical metaphysic, because at times it may be indefinite and incoherent.

It is, however, in the biological view that the peculiarity of Mr. Spencer's ethical system comes more distinctly into prominence. His treatment of pleasures and pains, and of their relation to morality, constitutes the essential moment of this aspect of ethics. Pleasure-giving acts, he argues, are those which increase life; pain-giving, those which decrease it. This is shown by two considerations: first, that originally the act which an animal tends to perform is the pleasure-giving, and, secondly, that each developed creature is kept alive by pursuing the pleasurable and avoiding the painful. This connexion between pleasure-giving acts and life-sustaining acts is supposed to supply to morality an ultimate basis. For if the pleasurable be the condition of existence, then morality, which is impossible without life, must be based on that which makes life possible, *i.e.*, on pleasure. Ingenious as the argument must be admitted to be, it is nevertheless exposed to serious objections. In the first place, by assigning a reason for the ultimateness of pleasure as an end, it really makes it only a means to something else, that is, to life. And the question, Why should I live? requires that a reason be assigned for this end, which also becomes thus a means, and so on *ad infinitum*. But, secondly, even if this be passed over, the argument is still untenable. For granting that morality is based on the conditions of sentient existence, it must follow that *my* morality is based on the laws of *my* sentient existence. The lowest sentient beings seek their own pleasures and avoid their own pains; and as "this which holds with the lowest consciousness must hold throughout," it is obvious

that I am what I am in virtue of having pursued a similar line of conduct. Now as moral conduct is merely "highly evolved conduct," morality must consist alone in seeking by the safest and best and most numerous means my own pleasures and avoiding my own pains. It might be granted that each individual did not seek, and ought not to seek, merely the momentary pleasures. As somehow endowed with higher faculties than those of sense, he might compare present pleasures with one another and choose the highest of them, or he might even postpone them all for the sake of a future enjoyment. But Mr. Spencer requires no such concession. The theory of pleasures and pains on which the evolution of life has been dependent refers to *present* pleasures and pains. "Does the action tend to maintenance of complete life for the time being? And does it tend to prolongation of life to its full extent? To answer yes or no to either of these questions, is implicitly to class the action as right or wrong in respect of its immediate bearings, whatever it may be in respect of its remote bearings" (p. 77). From these words of Mr. Spencer's it is clear that everything must be right which gives *either* momentary pleasure *or* the possibility of increased future pleasure. But facts must be our tests for theories; and they certainly are not in harmony with this *dictum*. The moral consciousness emphatically asserts that adultery is wrong, even though it "tend to maintenance of complete life for the time being," and that forgery is not right even though it "tend to prolongation of life to its full extent." Whatever be the merit of Mr. Spencer's hypothesis as such, it is assuredly no theory of the moral world. He himself has recognized its inadequacy to the facts of the moral consciousness, but he traces this to anomalies which, in

his opinion, are merely "incidental and temporary." They are due to misadjustments between man and his social environment, and must, he thinks, disappear in the course of development. But this explanation proceeds on the assumption that man can be isolated from his social environment, and that *it* exists apart from *him*. It would almost seem as if Mr. Spencer fancied that at certain epochs "social environments" fell directly from heaven, with which man was not in harmony till he had worked himself up, or rather had been forced up, to this higher celestial standpoint. But surely the social environment is made by man himself, and if he has been, and is now, misadjusted to it, we see no grounds for expecting a future harmony. The evils which, according to Mr. Spencer, evolution has brought, it must, we think, ever propagate, but can certainly never destroy. And the assumption he makes is only a very daring attempt to protect an otherwise untenable position. This, however, Mr. Spencer himself is far from admitting. Confident that nature will ultimately adjust itself to his theory, he says: "The connexions between pleasures and beneficial action and between pain and detrimental action, which arose when sentient existence began, and have continued among animate creatures up to man, are generally displayed in him also throughout the lower and more completely organised part of his nature, and must be more and more fully displayed through the higher parts of his nature, as fast as his adaptation to the conditions of social life increases" (p. 87). Our higher nature must be an annoyance to Mr. Spencer; it will not keep within the limits of his theory. With his usual optimism, however, he does not despair even of it, when man shall have become adapted to his social life! Having emerged, as

he conceives, from the "militant" life, man still carries with him some of the old adjustments, which do not answer the requirements of the "industrial" life into which he has come. But it is apparently forgotten that this emergence is man's own act, that he has created for himself alike his past and his present social environment, and that before he is adjusted to the "industrial" life (as the theory requires) he may already have enveloped himself in a more highly-developed tissue of social relations. For the social organism is not, as Mr. Spencer so inconsistently seems to suppose, a lifeless stationary mechanism, but a living and progressive organism. Were man merely sentient he would be subject to no other influence than that of the physical environment, which would in time bring him wholly into harmony with Mr. Spencer's hypothesis. But as rational and moral he is not merely law-obeying but also law-giving. It is *this* fact that explains the misadjustments of man's higher nature to the requirements of a hypothesis which is at best valid only for brutes.

At this point we must expect remonstrances from the Evolutionists. Has not Mr. Darwin, they might ask, traced the descent of man from the lower animals? Who dare in this generation speak irreverently of the brutes, or even of the matter from which they have been generated? If you distinguish man so antithetically from the other animals, then "the implication is that the system of guidance by pleasures and pains, which has answered with all types of creatures below the human, fails with the human" (p. 84). Now this implication I am certainly ready to accept. Nay, apart from it, I find the whole moral world an inexplicable riddle, upon which even the ethics of evolution has not thrown a ray of light. Brute-

guidance by pleasures and pains is probably not sufficient for man, just because he is more than a brute. But it is no problem of ours to determine what "answers" or what "suffices" for human or for other beings. Taking our stand on indubitable facts, we have only to ask what are the conditions of their possibility. And the facts of the moral world we find inexplicable if pleasure be the end for human beings. Mr. Spencer endeavours to strengthen his position by thrusting on his opponents a wholly irrelevant problem. "The admission being," he says, "that with mankind it [guidance by pleasures and pains] succeeds in so far as fulfilment of certain imperative wants goes, it fails in respect of wants that are not imperative.* Those who think this are required, in the first place, to show us how the limit is to be drawn between the two; and then to show us why the system which succeeds in the lower will not succeed in the higher" (p. 85). Now that we are not obliged to show anything of the kind will be manifest by a slight survey of the situation. The fact is the moral world; the ethics of evolution is the proposed explanation. It sets out with a biological theory of pleasures and pains in accordance with which man does and should seek the one and avoid the other. But on examining the actual facts, it perceives that man does not make this the end of his conduct, and that it could be at most valid only for his sentient nature. Does the Evolutionist now recede from the position he has taken up and confess himself vanquished by the logic of facts? Quite the reverse. I grant, he says, that man's higher nature cannot be brought under my hypothesis, but I believe that in the course of development this disharmony will disappear.

* These "wants that are not imperative" are, however, according to p. 87, those of "the higher parts of our nature!"

Have you not faith equal to that? Then you shall explain why a system of guidance which "succeeds" in the lower nature will not "succeed" in the higher. But the obvious rejoinder to our Evolutionist is, that you are neither the Creator nor the critic of the Creator's ways; and have, therefore, nothing to do with what "succeeds" and what does not "succeed." You have only to explain what actually exists. Whether guidance by pleasure and pain would succeed or not is a question in which you have not the slightest interest; you are only certain that it does not "explain"—does not, even on Mr. Spencer's own admission, explain the facts to which he has applied it. Nay, it is because he is obliged to make this confession of the inadequacy of his theory that he throws out that other vain problem to his opponents. His theory does not explain the facts, so he turns upon you with the question, Why do not the facts adapt themselves to my theory?

But the biological standpoint, from which everything must be judged right that brings a surplus of present enjoyment, is after all surrendered by Mr. Spencer with the admission that "in mankind as at present constituted, guidance by proximate pleasures and pains fails throughout a wide range of cases" (p. 85). It is important to observe that biology has not made the slightest contribution towards the solution of moral phenomena. We leave it, with Mr. Spencer, in asserting that "special and proximate pleasures and pains must be disregarded out of consideration for remote and diffused pleasures and pains" (p. 85). And with this transition the Ethics of Biology becomes the ordinary egoistic Hedonism, which we have already found grounds for rejecting as a philosophy of our morality.

But the guidance by present pleasures and pains for which Biology so pathetically pleaded as the basis of ethics (how vainly we have already seen) is excluded by Psychology, which demands "the subjection of immediate sensations to the idea of sensations to come" (p. 108), and which claims that the feelings shall "have authorities proportional to the degrees in which they are removed by their complexity and their ideality from simple sensations and appetites" (p. 109). What then, we ask astonished, was the need of listening to the vain story of Biology at all? Why assert there what is denied here? Mr. Spencer is not insensible to this objection, and forthwith adduces a new ground for his biological treatment of ethics. "The current conception," he says, "is, not that the lower must yield to the higher when the two conflict, but that the lower must be disregarded even when there is no conflict" (p. 111). Without inquiring into the truth of this surprising assertion, we may merely remark that it supplies no *raison d'être* for assigning a biological aspect to ethics, from which was deduced the rightness of what gave momentary pleasure, and the wongness of what caused momentary pain, irrespective of "higher" and "lower," of greater and less degree of "ideality" and "complexity," or of any other limitation or qualification whatsoever it be.

Passing however at once to the psychological view, we are told that "the essential trait in the moral consciousness is the control of some feeling or feelings by some other feeling or feelings" (p. 113). How one feeling controls another is not however explained. That we determine our acts in relation to feelings and desires, that we compare our motives, and, if we would be moral, act according to the higher, is no doubt quite true. And this might be taken as

the meaning of the above passage, had not Mr. Spencer elsewhere said, the "conscious relinquishment of immediate and special good to gain distant and general good . . . . is a cardinal trait of the self-restraint called moral" (p. 114). But that this is no part of the self-restraint called moral, Mr. Spencer has been able to hide from himself and others only by using words that suggest a meaning to which he has no right. If we remember that by good he means the pleasurable, and if we make this substitution in the foregoing extract, it will be palpably manifest that it does not furnish any trait, much less the cardinal trait, of the self-restraint called moral. The traffic in pleasures doubtless involves self-restraint, but assuredly not of the kind called moral. On the contrary, it may be highly immoral. Thus, if a thief relinquish stealing £100 to-day, in order that by to-morrow he may have the increased pleasure of stealing £1000, nobody believes he has manifested "a cardinal trait of the self-restraint called moral." But it is only after Mr. Spencer has in this way emptied morality of all its content, that he attempts from the psychological standpoint a theory of its genesis.

Thus his first problem is the "postponement of present to future" good or pleasure, which he is pleased to call the problem of "moral control." Among savages, we are informed, the only restraint to the following of every impulse is mutual fear of vengeance. When some advance in government has been made and the strongest has become chief, this restraint consists merely in the fear of his anger. When he dies, the restraint becomes a dread of his ghost. Social opinion strengthens this feeling, for everbody has the same fear. What then would be the issue of this? Plainly all for which Mr. Spencer contends,

namely, that the individual savage gives up a present pleasure from dread of coming pain. The fear of punishment is his permanent motive. But this restraint is not yet moral. Mr. Spencer distinguishes it from the moral in this way, that the one is a restraint due to the "extrinsic effects" of actions, the other to their "intrinsic effects." Moral restraint is founded, that is, on an unchanging physical order, while this primitive restraint of the savage has its origin in a form of society that is necessarily changeable. Now arguing with Mr. Spencer on his own premises—on the assumption that moral restraint has no other meaning than he alleges—we are bound to maintain that his hypothesis does not explain the origin even of *such* a restraint. For no transition is possible from the restraint of the savage to the restraint of the Evolutionist, except on assumptions foreign to the theory. Why does the savage, whose self-control is not yet moral, forego the pleasure of scalping the comrade with whom he is angry? Because of the "extrinsic effects" of the action, namely, the chief's vengeance, would be Mr. Spencer's reply. But why does the moral Evolutionist refrain from slaying his enemy even under the greatest provocation? Because of the "intrinsic effects" of the action, namely, the destruction of the possibilities of happiness for the enemy and, in a certain measure, for his relatives and connections. Now these two cases have not the slightest analogy as regards the ground of restraint, which is the notion to be explained. The savage refrains from destroying life from fear of future pain *to himself*, the Evolutionist from concern for the pleasures and pains of *others*. The first motive is possible to a merely sensuous nature, the second presupposes the moral nature we are engaged in deriving. And between that stage of

the non-moral and this development of the moral, the hypothesis has not offered the slightest mediation. When Mr. Spencer says, "The truly moral deterrent from murder is not constituted by a representation of hanging as a consequence, or by a representation of tortures in hell as a consequence, or by a representation of the horror and hatred excited in fellow-men; but by a representation of the necessary natural results—the infliction of death-agony on the victim, the destruction of all his possibilities of happiness, the entailed sufferings to his belongings" (p. 120)—when he says all that, I repeat, he forgets that his own account of the genesis of morality can explain only those deterrents which he here rejects as not moral, and that it cannot by any possibility be brought into connexion with those deterrents which are here pronounced truly moral. In the selfishness which knows no restraint but that rendered prudent by the "extrinsic effects" there is no immanent dialectic that carries it over into a disinterested restraint constituted by an idea of the "intrinsic effects" of action.

Mr. Spencer does, however, assert that guidance by extrinsic effects is the necessary antecedent to guidance by intrinsic effects. "Only after political, religious, and social restraints have produced a stable community can there be sufficient experience of the pains . . . . which crimes of aggression cause, so as to generate that moral aversion to them constituted by consciousness of their intrinsically evil effects" (p. 122). But does Mr. Spencer mean to say that the intrinsic effects of murder are not as soon perceived as the extrinsic effects? That the death-agony of the victim is *not*, while the dread of punishment *is*, present to the consciousness of the murderer? The difference lies not in the priority of perception, but in the

fact which Mr. Spencer attempts to ignore, and on which his hypothesis shipwrecks, namely, that the one series of effects (the extrinsic) concern the agent, while the other (the intrinsic) in no way affect him. Is it not evident to anyone who will see that the extrinsic effects, which are by hypothesis dread of coming pain to *me*, can never generate aversion—moral or otherwise—to anything that threatens *another*, or causes *another* pain or even death?

Thus the pyschological view of ethics presents us with nothing which is not fanciful and absurd as a theory of our morality. It may now be added that it presupposes, even for that, a Society, a Religion, and a State. But as these are nothing else than a realized morality, the ethics of evolution must once more be charged with deriving morality from morality itself. Or more correctly, while professing to deduce morality from pleasures and pains it assumes along with these a social, civil, and religious organism, which can only be described in terms of the morality not yet deduced.

If Physics, Biology, and Psychology have failed to supply us with a philosophy of ethics, the case would seem nearly hopeless from the standpoint of evolution. There remains, however, the "sociological view;" and as Mr. Spencer has warned us that any of his conclusions regarding the correlative aspect of conduct becomes untrue if divorced from the other, it is necessary to follow him in this last stage.

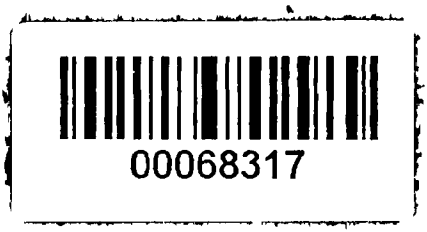
Were man not a social being, so begins the "sociological view," his "system of morality" or the "formula for his activities," would be limited to self and offspring, and would offer no contrast to the formula of other animals. And since there are other species which display "considerable degrees of sociality" it might be expected

that we should find a striking likeness between their "morality" and our own. But Mr. Spencer tells us that man is the only species which has a "formula for complete life." How strange that must appear to those who derive morality from adaptation to the environment—physical, biological, or social—he does not seem to have perceived. The formula, however, is not discordant with previous results, for though asserting that "the life of the social organism must as an end rank above the lives of its units" (p. 133), yet it is only because the individual happiness, which has all along been the ultimate end, can in this way be the better secured. The duties towards my fellowmen have, therefore, their final ground in the aim to secure for myself the greatest quantum of pleasure and the least of pain. But such a system makes us a mere collection of mutually repellent atoms that have no affinity with the moral agents to be explained. This insuperable difficulty for all hedonistic systems — the impossibility of reconciling the universal in morality with the particular in feeling — Mr. Spencer quietly passes over with the *dictum* that our present condition is one of transition, and the normal state is one in which all acts of aggression have been banished. In that Utopia "the relations at present familiar to us will be inverted; and instead of each maintaining his own claims, others will maintain his claims for him" (p. 252). With this hypothesis, framed to obviate objections to the fundamental assumption of the ethics of evolution, we have surely touched the goal of the new "moral science." If it does not furnish any account of the moral world, it at least prophesies that its present form is only transitional. But, alas, the Arcadia which it discerns is not yet within the ken of ordinary mortals, and its dim margin fades

for ever and for ever as we move. And as moralists we have really nothing to do with that untrodden future. For the fact is that we have certain moral notions and beliefs in the *present* stage of our development, of which we ask for a philosophical explanation. Any theory which passes these over in favour of some imaginary reality of the future, may be ingenious enough, but is assuredly worthless as a philosophy of our actual morality.

And thus the ethics of evolution has little to add to the hedonistic systems we had already found grounds for rejecting. It has, however, laid stress on one important fact, hitherto much ignored in all moral speculations—on the gradual development of moral notions, feelings, and beliefs. But neither that fact itself nor the validity of the moral conceptions has it in any way philosophically explained. Its principle is directly opposed to the empty abstraction formulated by Kant, but it is impotent as this to account for the concrete facts of the moral world. Between them both lies the idea of humanity as foundation for morality. And in the varying degrees of insight with which this idea has been comprehended by different peoples and at different epochs, we shall find an explanation for the divergence of moral belief and practice, as it has existed, or as it still exists at the present day.

THE END.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